



GOD OF COOKING

BOOK 02

Boötes

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

God of Cooking

(요리의 신)

by

Boötes

(양치기자리)

Synopsis

30 years old Jo Minjoon had always wanted to become a chef.

However, he started his culinary career late in life and is chopping onions at a restaurant.

Regretting his life choices, he wishes he could go back and change it all and falls asleep.

Meanwhile, someone is willing to give him another chance and send him back in time.

How will he use his new powers obtained from this mysterious being?

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Chapter 101: The Mirror Recipe (4)

It was really clear what those words meant. Jo Minjoon's eyebrows shook. He could only get more perplexed because he had never thought that a situation like this could happen. He had felt that Chloe's eyes were warm and gentle to the point of being strange. However, he had never thought that there would be affection of the opposite sex in it because Chloe was gentle to everyone. He didn't want to become a dull fellow that misunderstood that.

‘In the end, I was a dull fellow.’

As he tried not to misinterpret, he couldn't even know the things that were clearly seen by the eye. His heart beat. Was it simply because he was surprised, or because there was a similar feeling like Chloe in him.....He couldn't even know that himself because this situation itself was really unfamiliar for him.

“It's not that I want to do something immediately.”

Chloe said with a careful voice.

“Whatever answer you give me, we can't do a thing immediately because reality is like that. I'm sorry. But I can only be like this. Because if we were to separate without saying anything, I know that that would be the end. If at least I were to tell you.....”

Chloe's words dimmed. An awkward silence flowed. Jo Minjoon just looked at Chloe's face. Because of exercising, her skin was solid, but it didn't mean that even her mentality was solid. Chloe was basically a soft person. It would be a lie if he didn't want to protect her.....

Jo Minjoon's lips trembled. In his mind, his mouth opened a few times, and said many things. But there was nothing he could actually say. It wouldn't have been easy for Chloe to say those words. While he didn't know, she would have pondered, and at the

same time feared and expected. Thinking about that time, thinking about her heart, Jo Minjoon couldn't give her an easy reply.

“.....I did go out with a girl.”

It wasn't someone he fell at first sight. She was a person he met through the connection of a friend. She was a college girl that specialized in the violin, and just like most of music students, she was a girl that grew without lacking even a bit of sophistication.

“She was pretty, nice, and smart. Honestly speaking, she's just the role model men want. And it was also like that for me. She was fine, right. Although I didn't feel my chest boiling, I still thought that that was something that could only happen in dramas or novels. But that wasn't it. Different to me, she really liked me. Really sincerely.”

Jo Minjoon's eyes crumpled as if he was suffering. He slowly continued to say.

“A lover is more sensitive towards the others feelings. Just like I knew that she treated me with sincerity, she should also know that I was only acting that I liked her. No, I did like her. Because she was a person you could only like. But the feelings I had back then wouldn't be that different to liking you. That's why we separated... In a really messy way.”

Jo Minjoon said that naturally and clearly.

“It's because I like you that I don't want to make such mistakes with you.”

In the end, what he said was a decline. Chloe forced to put a plain expression but she sniffed and gulped. It was clear that she was opening her eyes big to hold up her tears. Chloe gathered her hands as if she was praying and covered her mouth and nose, and she opened her mouth in that state. Her voice didn't have strength and trembled as if she was suffering from a cold.

“I have a lot of things I want to say....But I think that I will

crumble if I say those things. Me, and this relation.”

“.....Whatever you say, I won’t change.”

“It’s not your problem. This.....Is a problem of my feelings. So I will say one thing. No, I will beg you for one thing. And perhaps, I would be begging you.”

She didn’t shed any tears. It seemed like she wanted to desperately avoid being that miserable that her eyes she opened strongly were shining clearly. But of course, it may seem that way because there were tears in her eyes..... It was the last pride Chloe had of not wanting to show herself to Jo Minjoon.

“Only once. Can I hug you? No, can you hug me.....?”

How many people would there be that would decline after hearing those words? At least, Jo Minjoon wasn’t. No, perhaps if it wasn’t Chloe, he may have replied that he didn’t want to. However, Chloe was also a precious person for him. Although it wasn’t as a woman, she was a person he wanted to be together with for life.

Jo Minjoon slowly moved his feet. He, who sat next to her, looked at her face. Her nervous face that seemed like she would burst of tears was shaking. Jo Minjoon hugged Chloe. He embraced her small, solid shoulders that were soft at the same time. Chloe’s breath reached on the right side of his neck where he had the injury. That feeling that made him burn, was it simply because of Chloe’s breath?

Chloe was small, though it wasn’t about her height. Although she wasn’t as big as Kaya, she had the height of average girls. But even so, she was small. And the reason was only one. Right now, she wasn’t the dignified chef Chloe nor everybody’s gentle Chloe.

Chloe embraced Jo Minjoon’s back. A suitable slim body, but enough for girls to feel reliable. Because they couldn’t see each others faces, only then could Chloe let out the tears she was

holding in. But of course, Jo Minjoon wasn't so dull as to not to notice the tears that reached his shoulder, but not being seen was the important thing.

She wanted to get this embrace. She wanted to be the person inside his embrace as time flowed. Those feelings made Chloe hug him more firmly. She was just rejected, but her heart beat even more at Jo Minjoon's hand patting her back.

Jo Minjoon placed his cheek to Chloe's hair. He could clearly feel her beyond her hair. Her soft skin, her pulsations, the rising temperature. It was regrettable. He wanted to console her but the only thing he could do right now was patting her back.

You wouldn't know what they felt when they hugged each other. They could have felt pain and regret, or peace and optimism between their temperatures. The one thing that was certain was that when they let go of each other no one was putting relieved faces. Jo Minjoon lent her a handkerchief. Chloe hurriedly wiped off the tears with the handkerchief.

"I'm sorry. I'm really miserable, right?"

"There won't come the day where you look miserable to me. Rather, I....."

"No. I feel the same, so don't say it. Actually..... If you have accepted me, that would have been a worry by itself."

He could vaguely guess what Chloe was meaning. Because she had already said it with her mouth that even if they felt the same way, they couldn't be together. Even the country they lived in was different. Just meeting each other would be difficult, so even if it continued, it wouldn't be continuing for real.

Jo Minjoon lied down on the sofa with the same posture. They looked at the ceiling that didn't have any patterns, and Chloe mumbled.

"Life is really difficult. You do this and it's difficult, do that and

it's also difficult.”

“Yeah.”

“Will someday become easy?”

“If you get everything you want, won't then become easier?”

“The things I want are exactly two. A restaurant. And..... But now I don't even have a restaurant and I'm not even a proper chef. I want to get both of those things. No, I will.. You, and cooking. I promise.”

“.....Don't be unreasonable.”

“I'm not. It's my dream. All dreams fell far at first. If I don't stop, that day will also come.”

The conversation stopped there. The two of them looked at the fluorescent lamp that was shining at the ceiling as if they were looking at the stars of a night sky for a really long while. Kaya that came in after hitting Anderson's shin and breathing hard frowned when she saw at the two of them.

“What are you doing?”

“Photosynthesis.”

“Photosynthesis is done by the sun. Even I know that much.”

Kaya noticed that Jo Minjoon was next to Chloe compared to before. But she didn't want to mention it. She opened her mouth with an angered voice.

“That bastard Anderson. He even lied to me on purpose just to make fun of me. I already knew that he was retarded.....”

Anderson appeared while limping his leg behind. Chloe sent her gratitude and sorry through her eyes, but Anderson just sat as if nothing happened with an innocent face. Jo Minjoon too could vaguely knew the situation.

“Anderson. You were a fox?”

“Not a bear like someone.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon dropped his head with an embarrassed face. Kaya sharpened her eyes and said.

“What is this? It seems like there’s something only I don’t know of.”

“Nah. It’s nothing.”

“You are only going to exclude me? What is it? Tell me.”

“I told you there’s nothing of the sort.”

“.....I will hold it today just because of Chloe.”

They didn’t have much time that they could be together. That’s why nobody could say a thing. Rather than saying this or that, they spent the time by looking at their faces. In the middle of that, Kaya noticed something weird. Chloe’s eyes were directed to Jo Minjoon frequently. With a warmth that couldn’t even be compared to when she looked at them.

‘.....Nah.’

Kaya forced to erase that thought in her head. Will that really be it, she thought. For what, to that special guy Jo Minjoon. Of course, his face was fine. His character was reliable and he also had quite a fierce manly side.....

She shook her head. It was then that the voice of the staff rang. “There’s not much time for the plane. You have to go now.” Those were some heartless words, but they couldn’t do anything about it. They all went to the garden. Just how hateful did the car that was parked right before the entrance feel. Chloe swirled her tongue and looked at the two.

“We are separating here. Everyone.....Thank you.”

“.....Chloe.”

Kaya embraced Chloe by surprise, and Chloe swepted her back. Chloe whispered with a calm voice.

“Be well. Kaya. I will cheer for you.”

“Yeah.....”

Kaya replied with a voice she seemed about to cry. Chloe, that also hugged Anderson, looked at Jo Minjoon and smiled faintly.

“Now that I see, I couldn’t say the most important thing.”

“.....What?”

Chloe embraced Jo minjoon instead of replying. And after standing on her toes, she placed her chin in his shoulders and whispered.

“I really like you.”

It was a voice so low only Jo Minjoon could hear it, but it was clearer than anything else. Chloe, that took two steps back, smiled sweetly and said.

“Many things will change through time, but at least that much isn’t going to change.”

He didn’t reply anything back. Chloe got on the car. The window of the car got down and Chloe let her head out and smiled brightly.

“I can’t tell anyone to win, but your cooking was the best. Cheer up.”

“Cooking.....You will keep doing it, right?”

At Kaya’s question, Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon for a moment and slowly opened her mouth.

“I realized this time that life doesn’t progress as one wishes, and that dreams also don’t come true as one wants. And my dream is in cooking right now. Even if people throw anything else.....”

Chloe smiled.

“...they can’t throw their dreams.”

Chapter 102: Cooking Style (1)

“If I’m going to be a candle that’s going to be turned off anyways, I would at least want to lit a fire on a big mountain so my shadow never disappears.”

Kaya said in her usual dignified voice...no, it was shining more than usual. Her cooking uniform made her seem more splendid than when she wore a white dress. On her face, there wasn’t her usual contorted smile but a smile that was dignified and filled with confidence.

When was it that she was cautious with other people, that now she was putting a face you couldn’t feel a trace of envy in it. It was the face Jo Minjoon admired. A dignified face you could only see from chefs. Even if it seemed rough, you could feel the firmness in every word she said, as well as the ambition and desire that seemed a bit dangerous. The Kaya Lotus you could only fall for and love was right there.

However, the moment Jo Minjoon extended his hand, he realized that his hand was too short. No, that he was too small. That he was an existence so small she didn’t even take him into account.

The awful low self esteem came looking for him like a cockroach. Jo Minjoon stood up from the place with a pale face as if he had seen a horrible monster. Dream. Usually, you would feel relieved that you have woken up, but he didn’t feel like that right now. Rather, his feelings became revolting because the dream he had just now showed his inner self.

He panted. Jo Minjoon felt his back was wet and frowned. It was a displeasing morning for many reasons.

Even after he finished showering, that feeling didn’t disappear. It was to the point that when he saw Kaya, who seemed to be waiting in the hall to tell him something, he flinched and stepped back.

“.....Did you get diarrhea?”

“Just make me breakfast.”

“Now you are really treating me like a maidservant. Hey, I told you that I was going to prepare breakfast until I got eliminated? It doesn’t remain much.”

“Why? Are you planning to get eliminated?”

“.....No. I’m going to win.”

“If you win you will have to keep making breakfast for me.”

At Jo Minjoon’s natural words, Kaya’s face became weird.

“You really want me to keep doing it?”

“I’m joking. If I get to that point, I’m not a chef, but an impostor. Well..... Even if it was half a joke, I was surprised that you kept your promise. You have done well.”

“Hmph. You dolt. Just because I am poor, my conscience isn’t poor as well.”

“Right. I believe in you.”

Just because her nature was clean and proper could she grow until that point. He came up with the thought that she was a star. A star he couldn’t reach but couldn’t give up on. Even with the opportunity he got, and being able to spend time with her, was he going to fall back again?

“.....You are always putting a serious face in weird places.”

“What’s weird? It’s showing the trust between people.”

“Leave it. You only made me the weird person.”

Kaya twisted her lips and turned her head. He didn’t know why but he wanted to pinch her cheek, but if he did it he may get caught for physical abuse. Although Kaya wouldn’t really call the police.

When Kaya went to the pantry, Jo Minjoon went with her and

checked the ingredients. Kaya looked at him as if it was unexpected.

“What happened? I don’t know about lunch, but you always left breakfast for me.”

“I got some stimulation in my dream. If I don’t make more effort even in little things.....”

“Whew, throw away that sincere character of yours. I do like that point from you but it feels stuffy at times.”

Jo Minjoon smiled without any word. Originally, he had this temperament, but now that he came all the way here he couldn’t act like this anymore. There were many people that wanted to return to the past. And he was also one among those people. Why he returned, he couldn’t know the reason. There were no reasons, and perhaps he could only have been lucky. Time turned back, and he was given an opportunity. The opportunity to cook. If he missed this chance, Jo Minjoon couldn’t be stately to himself anymore.

“It’s because I want to be a good cook like you.”

“You are telling me to make it more delicious, right?”

“It’s the breakfast made by the unparalleled Kaya Lotus, is there something not delicious that’s made by her?”

“Ugh, what’s with the compliments? So disgusting.”

Even after saying that, she couldn’t help the corner of her mouth from rising. She was inevitably putting strength, and in the end she got angry.

“Ah! Because of you I’m smiling for nothing!”

“Then you can smile. Why are you acting that embarrassed?”

“Ah, I don’t know. I’m going to cook. Don’t talk to me. The kitchen is a place where if you get sloppy for even a moment, an accident can happen! Understood?”

“Now it seems that you are looking to become a public benefit model.”

Kaya didn't reply and glared at him. If he saw that as a cute charm, did he have something weird in his eyes? Actually, just like he saw her as an existence that was no different to a an idol, perhaps feeling that way may be obvious. Kaya rubbed her eyes with her fingers and said.

“Ah, my eyes hurt. So what should I do for breakfast?”

“A porridge or paella should be fine.”

“If Chloe was here, she would be terrified because of the carbohydrates.”

“We aren't even bodyguard..... Ah, I said bodyguard. We aren't even bodybuilders, so there's no need to do that. In the first place you don't even exercise.”

“I do. I lift dumbbells, and what's that thing you grip with your hands?”

“You do it once or twice and leave it.”

Kaya turned her eyes to the eggs instead of replying. Jo Minjoon shook his head.

“You have to do something about starting breakfast with eggs. I didn't really like eating eggs for breakfast.”

“What? Why is that not delicious?”

“My mouth gets dry while I sleep, and think about putting eggs on top of that. You can only not like it.”

“That's why you eat it along with sausages or bacon. The deliciousness of the egg is going to wash that dry mouth of yours. You really can't understand this flavor?”

“I also don't like eating things like bacon or sausages that have a lot of oil. I prefer roasting it.”

“Fish doesn’t have oil? I understand your cooking style, but stop acting that stubbornly!”

At Kaya’s words, Jo Minjoon face became absentminded. He looked at Kaya’s face as if he became possessed. Kaya frowned.

“What. What. Why.”

“.....My cooking style?”

“Right. Your cooking style. What about that?”

“Do I also have a style? I....am just like that. Just cook this and that, and copy the dishes of others. Honestly speaking, the cooking method is also that way and plain. But I have a style?”

“That plainness is your style. You stupid.”

Kaya said as if she couldn’t understand.

“Are you a machine? You are a person. If you are a person you have a character, and if you have a character that’s shown in your cooking.”

“I’m originally the tranquil type. I don’t have any colour.”

“That’s why not having any colour is your style. Why? People must always be magnificent?”

“.....Then what’s the most delicious thing among the ones I made?”

“Making anything with a sauce.”

Kaya said with a calm voice. When Jo Minjoon’s eyes became round, Kaya continued speaking.

“The flavor of your sauce is the best.”

“.....And if that sauce was taken from the recipe of others?”

“That’s an obvious thing. How many people you think there are in the world that has their own recipe? If you don’t do weird things like molecular gastronomy, it would be difficult.”

“That’s right.But why do you seem more adult today?”

The reply didn’t come back.

The breakfast was blueberry yoghurt with toasted rye bread, butter with the aroma of basil, rolled bacon, and a spanish omelette with a lot of tomato paste. Jo Minjoon ate a bite and said.

“That Tess Gilly, how is she doing nowadays? Is she quiet?”

A lot of time has passed. It has already been almost a month since that case. Yesterday the 14th episode was broadcasted. The contents was about the mission when the top 6 remained. Now, the remaining broadcasts were three. Quarter finals, semi finals, and the finals.

‘.....And there are only two missions left now.’

Jo Minjoon’s expression became serious. Kaya gulped the rye bread smeared with butter and said.

“As she makes the case bigger, it would also be announced that she is stupid. And if she’s not dumb, she won’t do it anymore. She will keep saying something but..... I don’t know. Martin seems to be handling it somehow.”

“Even so, compared to before you are calmer.”

“Even if I do get angry, only I will be at a loss. Even so, back in the days there were many who badmouthed my past. If there is a difference to then, it would be that I can see what happens in the internet. So if I don’t, it ends there.”

“You thought well.”

“You are acting that way again. I told you not to treat me like a kid?”

“Right. You aren’t a kid anymore.”

Jo Minjoon smiled. It was a smile that was mixed with satisfaction and bitterness. The complete Kaya Lotus he remembered was slowly manifesting on her. It was something to

welcome, but he was also that much fretful because it getting more difficult to chase her back.

‘At least until the finals.....’

He was sorry for Anderson, but he wanted to be the one that would battle Kaya at the last mission instead of anyone else. Even if he did lose, it didn’t matter. A prize of 300 thousand dollars and Grand Chef’s fame, that was all for the second place. But the important thing was whether he could become that kind of chef or not.

“Anyways, why isn’t Anderson coming?”

“I don’t know. He may be exercising somewhere. That impostor.”

“Impostor? Ah.....Are you talking about that time when he said that Martin called you?”

“Right. He’s somewhat weird. Isn’t it that he has some kind of disease? Why does he pull those kind of pranks? We aren’t that close to be doing that.”

Kaya pressed the omelette. The tomato paste pierced through the yellow texture of the omelette and flowed like blood. As he turned his sight because of the horrifying feeling, he saw Anderson getting in from the kitchen’s door.

“Are you going to eat?”

“A yoghurt and bread is enough for me.”

Anderson talked like that and sat on the place with a thud. He only sat on the nearest chair, but that seat was next to Kaya of all things. Kaya glared Anderson and raised her dish and moved next to Jo Minjoon. The regrettable thing was that Anderson’s seat was in front of her.

“Hey, impostor.”

“.....Are you talking about me right now?”

“Right, you impostor. Because of you I couldn’t even be with Chloe properly until the end.”

“Ha, You should have done better at normal days. You are planning to do something for her when she leaves?”

“Shut up. You don’t have any right to say that. In the first place, why did you make that lie? Did you really do that just to make fun of me?”

Anderson didn’t reply. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon’s face and said with a displeased face.

“See? He’s like that.”

“Endure it. Anderson, too, may have had a reason he couldn’t say it.”

“What reason.....But what’s this?”

Kaya looked at what Jo Minjoon was writing. Jo Minjoon was writing something on the note on his handphone. But she couldn’t recognize it. It wasn’t that his handwriting was bad, but the letters were weird because it was Korean. Jo Minjoon replied with a calm voice.

“Practicing designing of recipes. I’m thinking about this and that. Just like you said, if my strongest point is the sauce, that means that my strongest point will be shown in the recipe. I have to keep grinding and polishing it.”

“.....You really work hard. But I usually thought of this but couldn’t tell you, these Korean letters look really cool.”

“It’s different depending on your handwriting. There are people that have handwriting so terrible compared to the alphabet.”

“Hmm.....Ah, right. Then do that for me.”

“What’s that?”

“Write my name in Korean. It would also be good if you make me a Korean name.”

A Korean name. Jo Minjoon just looked at Kaya. And wrote two big letters. Kaya looked at the screen with a face full of excitement.

“How do you read this?”

“ ‘Gaya’(가야) It’s the same. You just have to kill the pronunciation a bit. And it’s also quite a pretty Korean name. In ancient times..... There was also a country named Geumgwan-Gaya (금관가야) or DaeGaya (대가야).”

“Gu, gunganguaya? (공간과야) Ey, I don’t know. Gaya. Gaya. Yeah. It’s good.”

Kaya wrote her name on the plate with her fork and smiled with a good mood. It has also been a while since he saw Kaya smiling cheerfully like a girl that even he started to smile unconsciously. It was then that Anderson, who was looking at the two of them, coughed.

“Do it for me too.”

“Name?”

“Yeah.”

Jo Minjoon frowned. To fix the name Anderson, it could only be difficult. At the end of thinking for a long time, Jo Minjoon slowly wrote the name on the screen. Anderson looked at the screen with expecting eyes.

“How do you read this?”

“.....Anduksam (안덕삼).”

“Anduksam. Oh..... It’s certainly a name with a mysterious Asian feeling. From now on, if I go to Korea or meet Koreans, I will have to tell them this name.”

“Uh.....I don’t think there’s a need to do that.”

“No. I liked it. I can take a snap with my handphone and send it, right?”

“Of, of course.”

Jo Minjoon stammered and laughed awkwardly. Anduksam. If he reveals the truth later, what kind of reaction would he show.....

‘.....He won’t kill me, right?’

Chapter 103: Cooking Style (2)

The day when they were notified that the mission was going to start was after two days that Anderson got the name of Anduksam.

“Gather in the kitchen at or before 5 o’clock.”

Kaya mumbled with a not-too-bright expression as she looked at the back of the staff that spoke earlier “In the end, one more ends up dying today.”

“Don’t say the word ‘die’. It’s horrible.”

“Okay. Today, one will get eliminated.”

“.....That gets your mood foul by itself.”

“Then what do you want me to say?”

“Just don’t talk. It’s nothing good to think of.”

“So weak. Face reality, don’t run away from it.”

At Kaya’s words, Jo Minjoon looked at her with an astringent face. Kaya showed her white teeth and smirked. That smile was even more ill-natured today.

“I imitated you, how is it?”

“I realized that I am a really annoying bastard.”

“Good. Then it’s a success.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya and extended his hand.

“How can you swear like this when today may be the last day we see each other?”

“.....If you get eliminated, you won’t plan to see me?”

“No, even so, this won’t be my end.”

“I know that we are going to see each other again. I believe. That’s why I also swear on it.”

“.....If you believe to that point, wish me well instead of

swearing.”

Instead of replying, Kaya put a fresh smile. As the conversation reached its end, you should be more nervous, but Kaya rather felt more bright. Perhaps, regardless of the conversation, it could mean that it was proof of her growth.

“If you survive today, I will do it. Wishing you well.”

“And if Anderson survives?”

“I will curse him... and you.”

“.....Anderson will listen to curses at whatever he does, when he gets eliminated and when he survives.”

“He just looks like someone you want to curse at a lot.”

Kaya tilted her head. The faint dimple next to her smile was really cute, so much that if the lamp fairy appeared in front of him, he would wish for him to touch her dimple. Kaya’s corner of the mouth lowered. Of course, her dimple also disappeared. After he moaned because of the regret, she tilted her head as if it was weird.

“What? Was there something on my face?”

“There was. A dimple.”

“I have a dimple?”

“A small and faint one. Not too deep.”

Kaya turned on her handphone and looked at her face. A made up smile appeared on her face. Only then did her dimples appear, and she nodded as if she was satisfied.

“Certainly, even my dimples are pretty.”

“.....You said that you didn’t even know that you had them just now.”

After talking idly for a while, time passed. 4:47. Kaya looked at the clock without any words. She acted that imposing before. Jo Minjoon raised the corner of his mouth and said.

“You got nervous?”

“.....That’s not it.”

“Then?”

“Just.....It’s discomfoting. If I may be able to survive.”

Kaya hugged her knees. Jo Minjoon looked at her calmly and said.

“I like only one soccer player, one violinist, and one singer. I like them that way. And half of them are on purpose. Well, you usually say this, but my character is a bit special. And there’s also one chef I’m the fan of: Kaya Lotus.”

“.....Why me? I’m still nothing yet.”

“Because I know what kind of person you will become soon.”

Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon’s eyes without any words. The words he said didn’t seem like words just to make up the mood. She had always felt this, but it was like Jo Minjoon really knew the future. Precisely speaking, Kaya’s future. If it wasn’t that, he wouldn’t be able to believe in her because even she couldn’t do it.

“.....Can I believe? I, that believe in you.”

“You can. It’s a bit funny to tell you this as a competitor but you.....For me, you are a person that makes me want to follow your back, as well as a chef I want to walk side by side with. I adore you.”

Taking into account the plain voice he said it with, the contents were really magnanimous. Kaya’s ears turned red, and she turned her head away.

“.....You really seem like a player at times like this.”

“You know better that it’s not like that.”

“I don’t. Leave it, let’s go. There’s three minutes left.”

Kaya stood up. Jo Minjoon felt a bit of regret that if maybe one of

them got eliminated, it would be the last time they would share a conversation in peace. However, it was something they didn't have to think about yet.

As they got out to the hall, Anderson was already out. They thought that he would be more sensitive because of the mission that approached, but there was a pillow mark left on his cheek. Kaya opened as if she thought that it was absurd.

“I thought that you have caught some feelings because you went in with weight, but you were sleeping?”

“.....It's an obvious thing to recover some stamina before a mission. If I'm with you, it's obvious that my mental strength will get drained.”

“Who's treating me like such a beagle?”

“You already look like one.”

Kaya looked at Anderson with sharp eyes and then turned her head and said.

“Pour some salt on your cooking.”

“Then, you pour some pepper.”

“.....What are you doing, acting so childish?

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. When they seemed to have gotten more mature, they act like this. He coughed and said.

“Let's not fight and do well. Whoever it is, one will get eliminated, so you have to cook without regrets that much and spend the time without regrets.”

“.....Understood.”

Anderson didn't reply anything. Jo Minjoon hit Anderson's back and smirked.

“Let's go, Duksam.”

As they finished the pre-interview and got in the kitchen, the chilly air poked them. Jo Minjoon turned his sight. There was a curtain behind the three judges. Was there a cow or a pig in there? But even if that was the case, he couldn't hear any cries.

As Kaya and Anderson stood next to Jo Minjoon, Joseph opened his mouth.

“You became the best three. Congratulations. Now you are only a step away for your efforts to bear fruits.”

“Before revealing the mission, I will give you one riddle. They are the most welcoming customers, but are the most bothersome to cook for. At the same time, the most difficult adversaries. Anderson, who do you think it would be?”

“I wonder. A kid?”

“A kid..... It's understandable. But that's wrong. Minjoon, what about you?”

“Mmm.....Aren't they the elderly? Because there's nothing more picky than their tastes.”

“But they won't be the most welcoming customers. Fine. Kaya, you say it.”

Kaya didn't reply right away. She was the kind of person that when she couldn't resolve riddles like this, she tried until she got it right. When the judges gave her a glance, Kaya replied with a not confident voice.

“Family.....?”

The judges didn't reply and smiled brightly. At that moment, Emily went to the back and took out the curtain. At that moment, Kaya held her breath with an 'uph'. Her eyes seemed to redden, and soon became moist, and Kaya contorted her face and covered it with her hands. But it seemed like covering it was regretful, that she took off her hands and put strength in her eyes. What caught her eyes was no other than her family.

And that wasn't only the case for Kaya. Jo Minjoon looked to the front with shaking eyes. His mother Lee Hyeseon and sister Jo Ara were there. He felt that they had done their hair and done make up because they were going to be broadcasted, but even after having decorated, their faces were filled with complex feelings. Welcoming, stuffiness, sorryness, content..... It was even difficult to name them one by one.

In the case of Anderson, he was rather calm. 'Mm, they came.' That much was his expression. it wasn't that different for their parents. His father had a comparatively submissive expression, but his mother had an expression similar to Anderson. Joseph looked at them once and yelled with a good tone.

"Now, go and hug your family!"

Jo Minjoon embraced Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara. Actually in Korea, you would hug once in many months, and was in a quite a made up situation but.....At least for now, it was possible to make an honest hug. Jo Minjoon said with a teary voice.

"How did you come here?"

"I got a call a few weeks ago, if you are able to survive until the top 3, and if we were able to do a surprise visit.....I was half in doubt but in the end, you survived. You have done well. Really well."

"It was really difficult to hold back not telling you. Anyways, it's good to see you in a while..... Ah, why are you like that? Getting me goosebumps. Don't put that face that you want to cry."

Jo Minjoon gulped down the urge to cry that surged up to his throat. He knew how much his family suffered because of him wanting to become a chef before returning to the past. That's why when he got these casual compliments, he felt more indebted than ever.

"Father.....Is at the company?"

“Yeah. He did want to come, but he said that he was really busy.”

“Right.”

Jo Minjoon slightly pinched Jo Ara’s cheek. He did control his strength for it not to hurt, but Jo Ara frowned.

“Ah, what are you doing? I’m getting broadcasted, so don’t treat me like a kid.”

“You are still a kid.”

“Leave it. Stop.”

Jo Minjoon put a faint smile and turned his sight away. Kaya was hugging her family with tears running down her cheek. And his sight went to one of them. Different to Kaya, she had a brown hair close to blonde. Her forehead that was twisted really awkwardly, and her unnaturally spread legs. She had the looks a normal patient that suffered from cerebral palsy had. Was she called Gemma Lotus?

“Look mom. I was right.”

At Jo Ara’s voice, Jo Minjoon turned his head again. Jo Ara looked at him with sharpened eyes as if she knew everything.

“You were denying that much.....look. Just looking at the broadcast is obvious. You really are nothing?”

“Minjoon. I don’t mind much about having a foreign daughter in law.....But will you be fine?”

“.....There’s nothing to be fine or what not, because it’s not like that. I don’t know how many times I have said this.”

“It’s because if you don’t defend yourself that many times, it seems like it’s an impossible thing. Always saying that it’s a misunderstanding.”

“Leave it. This is a cooking program. We even have mics attached, so let’s go normally.”

Was it that the heavens knew how Jo Minjoon was feeling? That the judges gave them eye signs. The three contestants had to return to the countertop once again. Joseph opened his mouth.

“There’s no customer that are more picky than your family. And there’s no one more bothersome of a customer like your family. There are many cases where your husband chef, father or son expect you to cook after having smelled fire and oil all day in the restaurant. And most of the chefs never act to your expectations. Because even cooking in your house is mentally exhausting.”

“At the same time, it’s not easy to suit their tastes. Compared to the ingredients in your freezer to the ones in the restaurant, the quality and the varieties are certainly lacking. On top of that, your family are rather accustomed to your cooking, and they can make ill comments about your dish more comfortably. And of course, the feeling you want to cook for them again disappears.”

Why was it that the words of those two wasn’t simply heard as an explanation, but were talking about their experiences. At the voices that even had some trace of resentment on it, Jo Minjoon smiled awkwardly. At one side, Anderson’s parents nodded and exchanged weird sights between them.

Emily opened her mouth.

“Saying the conclusion, the theme is one thing: a high class dish for your family. It has to feel normal and luxurious at the same time. You should know how difficult of a thing it is. We don’t care about the methods you use. Make an Asian meal, or a Western full course, or if that’s also not it you can make only one thing. That’s your choice.”

“And...”

Alan said.

“The thing you have to be most aware is the satisfaction of your family. But of course, the final judgement will be on us, but don’t

forget to take into account your family. Even if it's a simple dish, put your skills and creativity in it. We will give you two hours to cook. The time to design the recipe is 30 minutes. Start the designing right now."

Jo Minjoon just looked at his parents. His heart beat. It was the first time he showed his proper self. Then. Then.....

He had to show them. He wanted to show them how much he had run and where was he standing...

...as well as what kind of chef he was.

Chapter 104: Cooking Style (3)

“Just because you have to cook for your family doesn’t mean that you should forget about us. You have to present not only a dish that is for your family, but also one that can be given an objectively high score to survive on this mission.”

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. This mission was the most disadvantageous for him. In the case of Kaya and Anderson, they only needed to make a familiar meal, but in the case of Jo Minjoon he had to make a Korean familiar meal.

To satisfy the tastes of the judges.....In conclusion, it wasn’t an easy mission. But of course, just like they are epicureans, they would be able to ignore the likes and the dislikes in ingredients like tofu and rice cakes to a certain point.....

It was a mission he hadn’t thought about. Because originally, this mission didn’t even exist. Was it called butterfly effect? His sole existence changed the flow of the mission..... That made him proud but it wasn’t that welcoming of a sensation.

“Kya, chee up!”

As he turned to look at the stammering voice, he saw Gemma half-clenching her fist. The regretful thing was that as her fist was half-clenched, her middle finger was more extended than the others.....But Kaya smiled brightly. More brightly than ever. You couldn’t even see a trace of embarrassment from her face regarding her disabled sister.

“I will make you a really delicious thing. Just believe in me.”

“Ung, bilive!”

As Gemma did that, all the other families felt that they also had to cheer. It was when Jo Ara yelled “Oppa, you can do it!”. Anderson’s parents, Fabio and Amelia stared at each other blankly. Amelia said with a voice full of arrogance.

“What are you doing and not cheering?”

“Won’t the mother’s cheering be of more strength than of the father’s?”

“That look of yours was really pitiable so I married you, but it’s difficult if you also act like that here.”

“What? You confessed to me first. Distorting the truth like this on a broadcast is difficult.”

“.....I’m fine with the cheering, so just be quiet.”

Below, Anderson said with a tired voice. He thought that he would be free of that couple’s fight while he was on Grand Chef’s house.

Joseph smirked.

“You are still the same. Fabio, Amelia. Your son climbed to the top 3 on this competition. What do you think of it?”

“I’m planning on making him independent if he can’t win.”

“Huh, and if he wins?”

“I will still make him independent because he will be able to walk on his own. It’s on me whether I choose if it would be a good independence or not.”

“What do you think? Anderson.”

“If both sides are making me independent, does my words even matter? Because I already became independent.”

Amelia’s eyes became sharp. Anderson got intimidated and turned to look away. And then continued to say in a rather low voice.

“And regardless of what my parents think, I’m going to prove myself on this competition. That’s not only to get a good independence, It’s because I want to stand on my own.”

“.....Doesn’t that mean that you want to get independent in the

end?”

Anderson’s eyes shook for a moment. ‘.....Is it the same thing?’ Anderson reddened his cheeks as if he was ashamed. Then coughed and turned to look away.

“I have to design the recipe. Don’t bother me.”

“I’m sorry Joseph. Our child is still a kid.”

At the word ‘kid’, Anderson’s brows twitched, but he didn’t react. Because it was obvious that if he said something only he would get exhausted. In some meaning, Amelia was more difficult of an adversary to handle than Kaya. Because she was a mother that made you more tired than someone you have an enmity with. Just how steep of a life was this.

“What kind of food do you want Jo Minjoon to make for you?”

Emily approached Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara and asked. The translator whispered those words in their ears and then Jo Ara opened her mouth. What came out of her mouth was English, but her accent was so sloppy it made you wonder if there was really a need to speak in English.

“Honestly, I don’t mind. Uh, mmm..... What was that? The field on food.....Ah, it isn’t a field but respecting the variety, what’s possible for my oppa and, mmm.....”

“Just say it in Korean.”

Jo Minjoon smirked and said. Looking at Lee Hyeseon’s soft yet without laughter, standard Korean eyes that was looking at Jo Ara, he thought that she may want to change her extracurricular English teacher when they returned home. Jo Ara said with a dispirited voice. And in Korean this time.

“In our house, there isn’t a boundary regarding food, so we are fine with whatever dish comes out. Even if it’s not a familiar meal, we are fine with it. But of course, I think that French dishes that seems like a bluff is a bit too much.....”

“So she says. Minjoon. What do you think about it?”

“I will keep it in mind.”

Jo Minjoon replied briefly. The remaining ones were Kaya’s family. Alan wanted to say something and looked at Gemma for a moment. She moved her chin as if just standing still was difficult, and she moved her upper body to the sides as if it were a metronome. Alan approached and opened his mouth with a soft voice.

“Do you like Kaya’s cooking?”

“Yea, I laik unni’s cookin most.....”

Grace slowly stroke Gemma’s head that replied like that. Was it because she was putting a sorry and sad expression too much? It looked like Grace’s face was filled with pain and hardships, and that was reflected on her skin. Because even her smile seemed hard and sad.

“Kaya treats Gemma really well. Ah, and of course to me. Even if she looks mean, she’s a really warm and tender kid. Everyone.....I would like it if you don’t misunderstand Kaya.”

“We don’t misunderstand. There won’t be no one here that doesn’t know that Kaya has a deep heart.”

Anderson put a face that seemed like he was saying ‘I don’t know at all.’ Jo Minjoon smirked and poked his side. Anderson looked at him as if he was asking why he was poking him, but Jo Minjoon pointed upwards instead of replying. Amelia and Fabio were looking at Anderson with a strict face. Anderson said with a tired voice.

“.....I want to run away from home.”

“But this isn’t your home.”

“Out of my parents sight. How’s Korea? Is it good to live?”

“I wonder. Won’t everywhere be good to live if you just have the

skills? Excluding Africa or places from the Middle East. Let's stop talking and make the recipe."

"Right."

Anderson put a depressed face and kept writing down things on his note. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes and concentrated. The sound of the judges and the families was getting away, and soon he couldn't hear a thing. His concentration was certainly one level higher even compared to his friends at school. It wasn't that frequent but he had memorized 100 English words in 5 minutes. But of course, after the test he forgot most of it.

'I will have to decide the style first.'

Honestly speaking, it was a bit uncomfortable to make a course cooking. How many Korean families would there be that ate like that? Not even needing to go to Korea, even in American families they placed mac n' cheese, pancakes, etc. in the middle of the table and shared it.

But just because of that, to prepare an Asian familiar meal, he remembered the last vegetarian mission. Even if the judges tried their best to be objective, in the end they are people accustomed to Western cuisine. They could only feel some distance unconsciously regarding Asian cuisine.

But in the end, the thing that suited most in this situation was an Asian formal dinner. But it would be a bit unreasonable to make an enormous meal because you were given two hours.....

'No, is it really unreasonable?'

Jo Minjoon looked down at his hands. He too had grown. The first time he came to Grand Chef he relied partly on the system's strength, but now he was confident on being able to claim that he wouldn't fall back on giving it flavor. However you saw it, he was in the top 3. Just because you knew the answer, not everyone would be able to solve it.

He tried not to be conscious of it, but he still felt a sense of inferiority. Compared to others, the path of being able to walk it while already knowing the answer. Because it was a strength already given to him, he tried not to be conscious of it. But every time people praised his absolute sense of taste or his ability to design recipes, instead of feeling happy he felt heavier.

And now, he wanted to get out of that weight. He wanted to get recognized that he was a chef with skills. He didn't need the recognition of the system or the judges. He needed his family's recognition. The recognition he couldn't even get once after he turned 30.

'If I'm going with Korean cuisine, I will go with the most luxurious one.'

If people said that it was Korean cuisine, some may think that it was simple and unsophisticated. But if you went with the royal court's cuisine, the story changed. But of course, if he went that way the feeling of serving his family would lessen, but he was planning on fixing that point by finding a common point in a normal dish and a royal court dish.

Jo Minjoon mixed and broke down recipes in his head. It was at this moment that he thought that his skills had raised. The system was the one that evaluated the recipe, but Jo Minjoon was the one on designing it. And it was to the point he felt that he was getting more accustomed to it. First of all, there were almost no cases where the recipe became a failure because the lowest score among the ones he had thought was 6.

And even thinking up of an 8-point recipe wasn't that hard. Only, it was on the case he took a really long time. Because the standard for the score was on the combination of time, dedication, technique, and creativity. So as the time gets longer, it was also obvious that he got a good score.

But there weren't many dishes he could make while also making

other things and getting 8 points in only two hours. The first thing Jo Minjoon thought of was a king's dinner table. A king's meal. If you wanted to give a Korean feeling, wasn't that much an ideal thing? However, he couldn't do so. Realistically speaking, for one person to make 12 dishes on 2 hours was simply impossible.

No, just making the side dishes would be kind of possible. But the number 12 in 12 dishes excluded the rice, soup, and steamed dishes. Thinking about all of that, it was really hard if you didn't have two bodies. You wouldn't know if the ingredients were already prepared.....In the first place, you only had 4 burners.

That's why the thing Jo Minjoon thought of was a 5-dish table meal. In the case of varieties of herbs, it doesn't take as much time comparatively, so he thought that he may be able to accomplish it. He didn't think of solely making the side dishes to be Korean. Just like Jo Ara said, just because they were Korean it didn't mean that they always ate Korean meals on their house. The most important thing was the feeling. The feeling it gave of being a Korean meal. If he focused on that, he thought that it wouldn't matter whether Japanese or Chinese dishes was on it.

Normally, he should be able to organize the recipe faster than anyone, but today he couldn't do so. It was unavoidable because if the process of designing a 5-dish table, taking into account the cooking and composition score, was easy he wouldn't have come as a participant but as a judge.

Lee Hyeseon looked at Jo Minjoon. Although he was her son, this was her first time looking him so concentrated like this. Rather than she didn't see him concentrating in other things than cooking, she couldn't be next to him. But even so, she felt weird.

‘.....Do you really like it? This path.’

She felt bitter. It wasn't because her son chose the path of becoming a chef, that was one of the toughest ones. It was because even while making that decision, Jo Minjoon was being

considerate and cautious to his parents instead of leaning on them. Perhaps it could mean that he had grown..... But parents always wish for the day their child grows, but when that day comes they shed tears without anyone knowing.

As she kept looking at Jo Minjoon with a nervous heart, the mission started with the judges' voice. Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara kept looking at Jo Minjoon cooking. They even got amazed at the fast speed he brought the ingredients compared to the others, but soon they got really surprised when he started to use the knife.

He was clearly different to when he was in Korea. He had stability and was faster. When they watched him handle the knife on the broadcast, they doubted if they didn't turn the speed of the screen faster, but that wasn't it. Just like watching the kniving is the easiest thing to measure the skill of someone, they got really surprised at Jo Minjoon's skillfulness.

"Mom, when could oppa have practiced like that?"

"I.....wonder."

The voice of the two didn't reach Jo Minjoon. Part of it was because they didn't talk in a high voice, but most of it was because basically Jo Minjoon concentrated the most when cooking.

A 5-dish table meal. Originally you should take a complex combination of rice, soup, stew, kimchi, pickled vegetables, fried vegetables, etc... But Jo Minjoon didn't mind that. In the first place, he didn't even remember the exact contents for a 5-dish meal. He didn't need to because there would be no one that would make them do a 5-dish meal.

The things Jo Minjoon cooked were 8. Fine white rice, beef radish soup (소고기무국) that was boiled in a taiwanese method that had japanese parsley and other spices, gochujang stew, roasted neobiani with a soy sauce mixed with honey sauce, chicken leg boiled in handmade masala with root vegetables, fried scombroid with a handmade chili sauce, fried bok choy, and vegetable

japchae. Actually, you could only say that the neobiani was the main dish, but the important thing was on the combination of the flavor.

The composition score was good. 9 points. the average cooking score was 7.3. Although it wasn't perfect, he had done his best and put all his heart. Because of that, when he heard Joseph's voice, he could stand firmly more than ever.

"It's been a long journey. Perhaps, this competition by itself could be the first step in your lives, but for the one that survives until the end it wouldn't be only one step, but five or perhaps 10 steps."

Emily continued.

"Regardless of the results today, you will be able to become excellent chefs. And the reason is simple. Rather than thinking of evaluating your dish, my head is filled with thoughts of enjoying it and wanting to taste it. A chef that makes an epicurean expect. And a chef that makes me expect aren't many."

Jo Minjoon looked up without words for a moment. He saw the nervous smiles of his mother and sister. The last elevator for the final destination was approaching. One, two, three.

"We will start evaluating."

And then, the door opened.

Chapter 105: Cooking Style (4)

A table was placed in front of Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara. Although it was difficult to say that it was a traditional 5-dish table, at least, it resembled Korean cuisine.

But it wasn't only in front of them. In front of Grace and Gemma, and Fabio and Amelia, food was placed on their respective tables. What caught their eyes were Kaya's dishes.

All of Kaya's dishes were simple and ignorant. The first one was a stew she put all kinds of rare and expensive ingredients in. There was also grinded lobster meat in its shell with white sauce and vegetables, and on top of that was mozzarella cheese. A T-bone so big many people had to eat it to finish it. A huge prawn, and huge crab, sea mussels with sarcodon mushrooms, oil tagliatelle with paprika, and a big strawberry chiffon cake.

At first glance, you would wonder if there was anything special, but you could only laugh when you saw the ingredients. Because each and everyone was an expensive ingredient and the amount of it was really big. It could clearly be seen that she wanted to make her family expensive and delicious things a bit more. Alan forced a laugh.

“Kaya, do you think that your family will be able to eat all of this?”

Kaya evaded Alan's sight and touched her apron as if she also noticed that she had gone too far. She didn't have much of an opportunity to give Grace and Gemma a good dish. Kaya also tried her best, but how delicious would dishes made with cheap or bad quality ingredients be?

And because of that, she wanted to properly take this opportunity. She wanted to give her things so delicious that would forever be engraved in their memories, and give them so much to the point their bellies exploded. And fortunately, her feelings

reached. Because every time Gemma grabbed tagliatelle or steak with sloppy fork movements, she put a bright smile.

Jo Minjoon didn't see Kaya's dishes to be excessive. Rather, he felt that he had lost. Not on the mission, but on the heart. She thinks of her family that warmly, so who would be able to say that it was excessive? On top of that, the cooking score wasn't bad. There was nothing that was below 7 points. The tagliatelle and steak was 8 points. And in the case of lobster, she even got 9 points. Although the composition score was only 7..... He didn't know how it would turn out because of the dishes personality.

Anderson's cooking was the opposite. Four course. It started with a bean soup with an inky bread he baked himself, pumpkin gnocchi with salad and cheese, meatloaf made with sheep meat, and a crepe with peanut compota. It wasn't specially huge, but when you looked at every one of it you could only think that it was high class. There wasn't a special recipe, and he only followed on the basics, but along with Anderson's clean skills there wasn't nowhere to fix. Only one thing, excluding the soup it was all 8 points.

‘.....It's dangerous.’

Jo Minjoon bit his lips. His dishes didn't fall back to theirs. Although the average score was lower, that was because he had more dishes. He had accomplished getting 8 points on all three mains, and excluding the rice there was nothing that fell under 7 points. But if they asked him if he did better than Kaya or Anderson, the answer would be vague.

Jo Minjoon extended his fist. Kaya and Anderson that were next to him put confused faces, and slowly extended theirs too. When the three fists touched Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Let's win. Everyone.”

It wasn't possible. One of the three was going to cross the door of elimination. There was no one that didn't know that everyone

could win. But why was it. At that moment, Anderson and Kaya nodded.

The word of winning didn't mean about the mission, but was directed at another thing. It wasn't that they had interpreted it secondarily. And even Jo Minjoon didn't say it with that in mind. It was only the problem of the heart. The heart of wanting everyone to win, and to keep on walking with everyone. Anderson and Kaya could feel that.

“At least today.....”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. His voice was trembling uneasily with nervousness, fear and resolution.

“At least, I want to win today. More than anytime.”

“.....You can. Everyone can.”

Kaya talked with a really softer voice compared to usual. If it was like usual, Anderson that should have said something about her voice, was keeping his mouth shut right now.

The judges approached. It seemed like Alan's eyes were directed to Kaya, but he turned to look at Anderson.

“I came eating your dishes. Before saying our evaluation, let's first hear the story of the family. Fabio, Amelia. How was it?”

“Well.....I wonder. I could see some lacking points.....”

“Even so, he's your child. Are you going to act that tenacious?”

“There's one thing our child education's we thought of when we married. We lecture what's meant to be lectured, and praise what's supposed to be praised. Well, the dishes were fine. And the flavor was also good.”

Amelia said with a calm voice. Different to Fabio, that had a brown hair, she had a blonde hair with blue eyes, just like Anderson. It wasn't only the colour, but the feeling was also the same. An attitude that didn't seem cute and was tenacious overall.

Her arrogant cat-like eyes directed towards Fabio.

“How is it Fabio? Do you want to entrust our restaurant to that kid?”

“.....I wonder. I think that it should be okay to entrust him with breakfast, when people don't have tastes.”

“So he says.”

Alan shrugged his shoulders as if he could do nothing about them. He looked at Anderson with eyes full of compassion.

“Don't worry too much. The evaluation of your families is only secondary.I really didn't know that they would say those words. To feel anxious because you may get dispirited at your family's words.”

“I'm accustomed.”

Anderson said with a calm face. It wasn't that he was saying because of consideration, but his face that really seemed accustomed to it felt more pitiful for nothing. He looked at Fabio and Amelia and said.

“If I were born as your son, I wouldn't have thought of becoming a chef.”

Fabio and Amelia just exchanged glances instead of replying. It was a really difficult couple to handle. Joseph forced a cough.

“Anderson, with some kind of meaning, you are the person with the most advantage in this mission. Rather than making food you usually eat luxurious, making a luxurious one more luxurious is way easier. But we put that much expectation on you.”

“Yes. I understand.”

“Do you think that you were able to act according to that expectation?”

“I think that I have never cooked something lower than that expectation.”

Jo Minjoon nodded unconsciously at those words. Although Anderson certainly didn't have an explosive strength, he was a cook that always cooked to your expectations. And perhaps, that was a better thing. Because being able to stably cook a good quality food on a restaurant, where you have to make many dishes, that has quite a meaning by itself. Joseph said.

“.....It's a good confidence. Fortunately, we also think that your dish fits your confidence. It was a cooking without any flaws. And the designing was also fine. I thought that it would be difficult to feel the sourness on this composition, but because each and every flavor wasn't excessive, with just the last peanut crepe, my mouth doesn't feel burdened at all. Your experience and basic skills could be seen from it.”

“If you have people that usually makes you these kind of dishes at home, the reason to go to a restaurant lessens to half. It was a meal that made me think like that. Thank you, Anderson.”

Emily followed up. Anderson smiled faintly. With just the evaluation, he felt that he had gotten halfway out of the elimination road. After that, it was the turn of Kaya. Alan said along a bitter smile.

“Kaya. Honestly speaking, I think that the feelings for a family is most shown on your cooking. The feeling of wanting to cook a little more, more delicious and more expensive things. This meal was so sincere it made me think that rather than focusing on the mission, you put more importance on your family.”

Kaya slightly glanced at her family that was at the back side of the judges while having her mouth shut. Joseph said.

“The important thing is that it seems like you grabbed a big handful of ingredients, but that rather makes the flavor more abundant. Because the more ingredients there are, the flavor tends to become more unpredictable. Because of that, in Chinese cuisine, they fry various kind of vegetables with oil and the flavor of the

sauce. Perhaps Kaya, your pasta and stew could contain some of that Chinese habit. Did you get influenced by Chloe?”

“.....I didn’t particularly think it that way. And I should have got some influence. There’s the time we shared.”

“I think that that was a good influence. Familiar meal, and that has a really hotchpotch visual, but I think that you have shown us what a really rich table meal is. I think that it’s a bit excusable to say this to you, that is still single but.....It really is like a mother’s flavor.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon frowned for a moment, and after he received the glare of Lee Hyeseon he lowered his head. After good comments kept pouring on Kaya, the judges looked at Jo Minjoon. He tried to force to stand firmly and put an imposing face. However, his heart was beating more than ever. Alan smirked and said.

“Minjoon. You used your head a lot, right?”

“.....Thanks for recognizing that.”

Jo Minjoon replied while half-laughing. There was no mission like today where he used his head that much. Alan continued saying with a calm voice.

“Actually, I didn’t expect for you to climb all the way here. I was also like that when your absolute sense of taste got exposed. Because the skills you had weren’t that impressive by itself to be on the top 3. Joseph did buy your potential highly but.....Potential is only potential. Are there only one or two geniuses on the world that couldn’t bloom?”

Even if he didn’t say that, Alan’s eyes that were usually glittering was shining more clearly than ever. Jo Minjoon looked at his eyes and mouth still. He looked at the words his eyes and mouth were saying, and heard.

“It’s foreign and familiar, and at the same time it’s excellent to be

able to get on our standards. The person that should have had it the hardest today must be you. The reaction of your family.....”

Alan turned to look back. Lee Hyeseon and Joara were putting a satisfied smile. And also in Alan’s mouth, a smile similar to theirs appeared.

“It’s just like you see.”

“Was it fine? No.....Was it good?”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t hold it back and in the end he asked. His chest was itchy, so he couldn’t do anything about it. The one that replied wasn’t Alan, but Emily.

“Yes. It was good. You must be the person that grew the most in this competition. And it was a meal that clearly showed your growth. Korean.....No, I should say Asian. A composition of Asian meals, dishes that was made with a fusion of foreign dishes. If it was a Korean fusion restaurant, even putting this table meal as a menu should have been fine.”

“Actually, our understanding towards asian cuisine isn’t that high. And perhaps, it may be lower to yours. The dishes you made this time won’t be separated that bigly with likes and dislikes if it’s served on the US. Even choosing gochujang stew instead of doenjang jjigae must have been because gochujang is easier to approach compared to that. And that was a nice thinking. If you are going to remain as a cook, you only need to cook well what’s in front of you. But if you want to become a chef you will need the ability to take into consideration the tastes of the people.”

“The combination was also good. If you point it one by one, you can see some lacking points with the eye, but the overall combination is really well-balanced. There’s no overlapping flavor, and there’s no dish which flavor outstands and covers the other dishes. Although the flavor of the radish soup was a bit strong..... It didn’t remain in my mouth for long. You did well, Minjoon.”

He received the good comments from the three judges. Now that the situation turned out like this, the judges seemed to be more troubled than ever. However, the result needed to show.

“Minjoon, can you come to the front?”

The judges called him. Jo Minjoon made some steps with an uneasy expression. Alan looked at him with an expressionless face and said.

“In your cooking.....Ah, this isn’t only talking about today. If there’s something lacking on your overall cooking, what do you think it would be?”

Jo Minjoon hesitated for a moment. At first, he thought that it was the basics, but honestly speaking, the basics were as polished as it should be. If there was something he didn’t have, it must be the blurry colour. Kaya did tell her that that was his strong point but.....

“That I lack a colour.....of my own?”

“I wonder. The colour of the chef, in the end, is felt differently to all the person that eats your food. In the first place, if you want to become a chef with some colours, it will be impossible at your age. That is if you aren’t the few geniuses that are in the world.”

“Then, what am I lacking.”

“You don’t lack anything.”

Alan replied briefly.

“Rather, the problem is that it overflows. Your thoughts, I mean.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t reply anything. Alan pointed at the half empty dishes and said.

“I have to satisfy my family, erase the foreign feeling, have to satisfy the judges. Those thoughts can only be shown on your cooking. But because of that, what needs to be inside of that should

be a simple essence. I would like it if the people that ate it felt it delicious. At the past vegetarian mission, you made a Korean table meal. Back then, we told you that if it was a familiar meal, it would have been just good. And we also said that it was regrettable that there wasn't a main."

"Yes. You did."

"In today's dishes, there were quite many mains. It was delicious, and the composition was also good. But do you know why I am saying these things right now?"

".....I don't know well. Tell me the answer."

"I will say it again. There are a lot of thoughts. It clearly shows your nervousness. Cooking for your family. But of course, we also told you to take us into account when making it. But your thoughts made this to be neither for your family, or for the mission. And of course I understand the difficulty of the situation. You may think that I wasn't objective. However that was also a handicap you should have overcome. Everytime we pinched the fork, it shouldn't have been nervousness, but consideration that we tasted. Do you know that difference?"

It was complex and it hit around the bush, but Jo Minjoon could seem to understand what Alan was trying to tell him. Joseph opened his mouth. With a soft, gentle but low voice.

"There are a lot of people that can make a delicious dish. There would also be quite many people in Chicago with skills such as Alan's or mine. But there are really few people that can make a good dish. Because even for me it's a bit difficult. Minjoon, can I believe that you will be able to become that kind of chef?"

Jo Minjoon's face became red. There was embarrassment and also because he was about to cry. Jo Minjoon said with a voice that was mixed with phlegm.

".....Yes. I will certainly become that kind of chef."

“Now that you say that, I will be able to say it a bit more relaxed. Minjoon. It wasn't because you lacked. But engrave in your heart that it was because you still weren't perfect. And keep walking forward.”

Final destination. In every novels and movies, there is always an ending. Jo Minjoon hoped for his ending to be a Grand Chef's ending. However.

“You have done well. Leave Grand Chef's badge and leave.”

His final destination was here.

Chapter 106: Arbitration Expenses (1)

Jo Minjoon's mouth trembled. He was putting strength on it to force a smile, but in the end the only thing his face expressed was that of discouragement. Why was it that he had to face this kind of situation now that his family was here? He didn't get the courage to look at Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara.

Did Chloe feel like this last week? Did she confess to him while feeling like this? He felt stuffy. Emily said with a soft voice as if she wanted to console him.

"Minjoon, you have done plenty. Although you couldn't reach victory, you can have some pride on having reached here."

As Emily said that, she sent a glance backwards. Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara stood up and went to Jo Minjoon. Lee Hyeseon grabbed Jo Minjoon's shoulders and quietly said.

"I'm proud. Minjoon."

".....Mom."

"Just because you lost today, don't keep that embarrassing face. I have watched you on the broadcasts until now. And I felt how much effort you poured, how much fun you were having, and what kind of talent you had. So son..."

Lee Hyeseon said with a wet voice.

"...don't cry and lift your head, okay?"

Jo Minjoon gulped back the tears and covered his eyes with his hands. Kaya was looking at Jo Minjoon with a stifled expression. It was the first time she had seen him like that. He was an adult, and he had always appeared very mature. But that Jo Minjoon was crying right now. just like a kid that hurt his knee, immersed in pain.

If you are a person, you can cry. Even if they had a huge plate,

where would a person be that lived without even shedding a single drop of tear. However she didn't like Jo Minjoon crying. If the tears were something like the ones he shed at Rose Island, when he tried the calf cheek meat, it didn't matter. If it was tears because he was that sad.....She didn't want to see it.

However there was nothing Kaya could do. There was nothing between them. Suddenly, she remembered the words she had asked to Chloe. When she asked her if they would be able to keep this relation even after the competition ended, Chloe replied that it was going to be possible because it reached her heart.

‘Will it truly be enough with only that?’

If only one of them were to separate.....She felt her heart getting empty after she thought of that. Kaya placed her hand on her chest. Beyond the badge that was there, her heart was beating anxiously.

“Kaya. Anderson. Congratulations. You now became the top 2. At the same time, you became able to get up on Grand Chef's final stage. Are you confident on being able to win?”

“Yes, I am.”

Anderson replied briefly but Kaya didn't. Her sight was still directed towards Jo Minjoon. The cameraman smiled and placed Kaya on the screen and Jo Minjoon that was at the end of her sight.

‘It feels like I'm filming a drama.’

When the cameraman smiled flustered for nothing, Joseph raised his voice once again.

“Kaya!”

“.....Ah, yes. Did you call?”

“The finals. I asked if you were confident on winning it.”

“There are no trophies or certificates of merits on my house.”

Kaya said with a rather low voice. She looked at Anderson with

cold eyes and said.

“It’s about time I got some on my shelf.”

—

Maybe it was consideration for the families that came a long way, but it didn’t happen that they had to return right the day after. That’s why Jo Minjoon could comfortably do the interview even on a late night. It was the first interview as a defeated.

“I don’t have any complaints about the evaluation. That was a really long winded explanation but.....They could only pick the worst among the ones that all did well. Speaking about the results, it’s a simple thing. Compared to the other two, I couldn’t give them as much impression. In the end, I was lacking.....”

While he was in the middle of speaking, he ended up sighing. It wasn’t because this reality was lamenting, but because of Martin’s face.

“.....Martin, I’m begging you but please don’t smile like that. It really shows that you like this.”

“What can I do if I like it? Now I am able to formally make the proposal. I’m talking about the tasting trip. You still couldn’t make a decision?”

“Actually, I haven’t thought much about it. This competition isn’t normally that fierce to take into account that I may get eliminated.”

“Good. Then, let’s put this on hold for now. We still have a lot of time. When are you planning to return to Korea? No, do you have somewhere to stay?”

“.....I wonder. I do know someone, but I don’t want to bother them. Is there a reason I need to be in the US?”

Martin smiled meaningfully. He opened his mouth.

“July 13th. Today is June 25....That’s 18 days from now on. Do

you know what day it is?”

“July 13th..... Ah, it’s the day the finals will get broadcasted.”

“The finals will be broadcasted live, with a scale that’s not even comparable to the ones we had until now. We will need you on that day.”

Jo Minjoon nodded with an ‘ah’ as if he understood. He kind of guessed what he was trying to tell him. He didn’t remember that the finals were originally broadcasted live, but it did happen on the seasons that came after this one. It was probably the season with the best reactions. Jo Minjoon smirked.

“It seems like the broadcasting station is really appreciating Grand Chef.”

“.....Well, you have a big part of it. Because after your absolute sense of taste, the average viewers increased some ten thousand more.”

“I don’t think that you will only call me..... Until what position is it?”

“Hoho, what are you talking about?”

At Jo Minjoon’s voice, Martin replied back with a question. Jo Minjoon looked at Martin as if he knew everything.

“I don’t think that you will call us only to cheer. Isn’t it related to the mission?”

There were no changes in Martin’s expression, but his eyes trembled for a moment. He forced to maintain the poker face, but suddenly let out a sigh and said with a voice as if he was putting down everything.

“Even if that was the case, you know that I won’t be able to reply. Fine. Even so, you will get to know this after we contact once. Top 10. Excluding the two facing on the finals and you.....Chloe, Sasha, Joanne, Ivanna, Olivia, hugo and Marco. Are these 7. They will

take place on that day. I can't tell you anymore than that. You can make guesses however you like."

"Well, will you pay for the lodging fees?"

"I can give you the lodging and boarding fees. If perhaps you can't get a room, I will make it so you can stay at my house, so don't decline. This offer won't simply be so that you can participate on one more episode. This will be one of the best chances you have on your entire life."

Jo Minjoon, that heard these words, couldn't quite guess what he was talking about. Martin smirked as if he was satisfied at Jo Minjoon's complexed face.

"You told me before that our program is getting quite the love from the broadcasting station. That love, I will make you properly feel it."

".....Fine. Even so, there's nothing I have to do. And the opportunity to see my other friends is also quite rare."

"You have thought well. Then, I will talk to you about the think we were talking about. It's about the tasting mission."

"Tell me more about it."

Suddenly, the voice of a really slim woman was heard. Jo Minjoon got surprised and turned to look back. Emily was looking at the both of them while standing on the door. Jo Minjoon said with a tired voice.

"Emily, you didn't leave yet?"

"I wasn't waiting for an explosive reaction, but you are too much. Even so, I'm still your fan."

"Ah, that's not it....."

"Leave it. It was a joke. It's fine if I butt in, right? I think that I also have some place on the thing you are talking about."

".....Fine. Robert, bring one chair over here."

“Is there a need to do that? There’s a seat right here.”

Emily said with a calm expression and sat next to Jo Minjoon on the empty seat of the sofa. Looking that Jo Minjoon let out a sigh as if he was tired, Martin thought. That the both of them really seemed like a playful aunt and a feisty nephew. And the ages was also similar. But of course, Emily wouldn’t agree that she was indeed an aunt.

“Minjoon. There’s no need to think for long because I have also thought for you. It will be good if you accept the tasting trip.”

“.....Emily, I will ask you honestly. Just why is it that you want to bring me to the tasting world? How much am I related to you about becoming an epicurean?”

“If you want me to tell you the reasons, there won’t be no end even if we take all the night. Do you want to hear it all?”

“I will ask you for the most important three.”

“Three things..... Only three.”

Emily grabbed her chin and fell on her thoughts. Looking at her face, it really seemed like there were a lot of things that it was difficult to only choose three among those. Only after a long while did Emily raise her head. And her face was quite serious, that wasn’t really like her.

“You are the only person in the world that can become a star epicurean.”

“.....The only one? You are also a star.”

“The reason I’m a star isn’t because my sense of taste is outstanding. Actually, there will be plenty of other people that have better sense of taste than me. Even so, the reason I could become a judge on this program, well.....there isn’t even a need to hide it. It’s because I’m the heiress of Potter’s beer. The splendid life of a conglomerate, on top of that, quite good tasting abilities. I was only suitable to use my position.”

Emily added. “But of course, it would also be because of my pretty face that’s like that of an actress.” Jo Minjoon shook his head as if he was sick of it.

“Even so, I still can’t understand that I can be the only one to become a star epicurean.”

“You don’t understand? You are the only person in this world that can’t get any opinions about your sense of taste. You can feel everything that’s on a dish. With just that, if you say that a dish that doesn’t have any flavor is delicious, that will also become a delicious dish. And when people that heard of that go to that restaurant and eat the same thing, they will claim that there is a flavor they couldn’t even feel. Because with just your tongue, it can give that amount of trust. Rather than the epicureans that roamed various restaurants around the world for tens of years, they will think of your opinion to be more absolute!”

Emily said with a reddened face.

“You can buy the trust of the people easily. That’s the most difficult thing in the world, but for you it is nothing.”

“.....The second one?”

“It’s simple. I want to see just what kind of world your sense of taste is. Just like an artist is that way, epicureans may also get inspired at the tasting world of another one. Even if you eat the same food, depending on the explanation of who does it, the flavor will become completely different. I want to know and feel just how is the flavor expressed in your mouth. Because just with knowing your methods, my life will become much funnier.”

Regardless of the compliments, Jo Minjoon’s face wasn’t that bright. It rather became more hard. It was unavoidable because Jo Minjoon didn’t have that kind of sense of taste. Hence, he calmed down. Jo Minjoon said with a calm voice.

“Then what is the last reason?”

“I’m curious.”

Emily replied shortly. Just like even if you said it long you wouldn’t express it all, she poured all of her feelings in that short sentence. But of course, she would have to explain it.

“The sense of taste of people are different, the likings are different, and how they feel it is also different. Those words follow in the world of tasting. Perhaps, if you can stand up an absolute standard.....If you can completely differentiate the flavor that is on a dish and those that aren’t..... It wouldn’t simply be for epicureans, but the tasting standards for everyone on the world will increase. A world that has an absolute tasting theory. One that can’t be opposed and isn’t subjective. I’m talking about that kind of theory.”

Jo Minjoon shut his mouth for a moment. He wasn’t someone that could do that. Although he could pretend to have an absolute sense of taste.....He couldn’t become a real one.

However he couldn’t say those words and didn’t even want to. He got greedy. If he didn’t miss this opportunity, it will become quite an experience even if he didn’t have an absolute sense of taste. The strength of the recipe will make him able to make a recipe more solidly.

Silence sat between the three people. And the one who chased it away was Jo Minjoon.

“You will regret it.”

“.....What.”

“Having placed your expectations on me. I’m not that incredible of a person.”

Just because he wasn’t an incredible person, he wasn’t able to ignore the treasure that was shining in front of him. Jo Minjoon said. And the fish had bit the bait of the fisher.

“I will receive it. That proposal.”

Could the fish become a big one?

Chapter 107: Arbitration Expenses (2)

Today was one of the happiest days for Kaya. At the same time, the most awkward one. The victory seat of Grand Chef that felt so far away and thought that she wasn't going to be related at all was right in front of her. On top of that, her family that she was always worrying about appeared here as if they didn't have any problems..... for her, she couldn't be more happy than ever, because the best thing for Kaya was her family.

However, she couldn't just be happy. Jo Minjoon got eliminated. But of course, this didn't mean that he got eliminated for life. Whenever and whoever it was, one of the two had to get eliminated. But she couldn't do anything about her stifled feelings.

“Kaya. Why laik that?”

“Huh? No, it's nothing. I was thinking about something for a moment. Drink this lemon smoothie. The quality of the lemon is really good so the difference to what I made at home is like heaven and earth.”

Kaya brought the straw to Gemma's mouth. Gemma took a sip and put a smile that for others would seem contorted. Jo Minjoon got into the hall. He looked at the people gathered on the table with awkward eyes: Anderson, Kaya, and their families. On the table there were things like cakes, biscuits, ice creams, wines, etc.

Jo Minjoon sat next to Jo Ara and silently asked.

“Did you talk well?”

“How well could I have done? I only realized that my conversing skills were hopeless. Even so, one thing was easy to understand. ‘My korean name is Anduksam.....’ “

At those words, Jo Minjoon started to cough as if something got stuck on his throat. His eye that had a tear twitched and looked at Jo Ara.

“Did Anderson say that?”

“If not, how will I know?”

“.....Now that I look, it seems like you also explained the meaning.”

“I didn’t, but I did laugh for quite a while.”

For some reason, he did feel that Anderson’s eyes were quite chilly. As they made eye contact and saw that his eyelashes were trembling as if he put strength in it, he thought that he wouldn’t see him off kind heartedly. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth astoundedly.

“Anderson, it seems like there is a misunderstanding.....”

“Shut up. I’m not listening to you. That’s why my parents taught me not to trust everyone.....”

“This kid is making us into some weird parents. Fabio, what do you think about it?”

“Disobeying kids that don’t listen to the words of their parents always use their parents as an excuse in this kind of situation. We taught them wrong.”

The both of them let out sighs. Only Anderson, who became a problematic child, frowned.

“Just when? Aren’t you even busy when you have a restaurant?”

“It’s fine. This week is a vacation.”

“.....What about the reservations?”

“This is why raising a child is in vain. Just what day is tomorrow?”

Anderson rolled his eyes for a moment. And opened his mouth as if he didn’t know at all.

“First, it doesn’t seem like your birthdays.”

“It’s our wedding anniversary! I told you he is like this... Just

when are you planning to get some affection?”

“Just where in the world is a child that even remembers the wedding anniversary of their parents. Now you will also tell me to remember your weights. Leave it. Just eat quickly and go away.”

“I’m sorry. We couldn’t teach our son how to properly age. Miss Kaya? You are having it hard, right?”

“You did leave quite a terrible son.”

“.....I don’t think it should be something I should hear from you.”

Anderson glared at Kaya and growled. However Kaya put a confident smile as if she had won and draw Gemma closer by her neck.

“I am a nice daughter. And also a nice sister. Right Gemma?”

“Yeah.”

“See? She says so.”

“.....It seems that there’s no one on my side in this life.”

Didn’t the one he trusted in give him a name that made people burst to laughter when they heard it? His parents focused more on making fun of him rather than praising him. Anderson started to mash down the carrot pound cake because of the nervousness.

“.....Anderson? You didn’t mash down the cake just for fun, right?”

“Ah, god.”

The love of the parents that even make their atheist son a believer.

Jo Ara snickered and whispered to Jo Minjoon’s ear in a low voice.

“Anderson is cute.”

“.....Who is what?”

“He is cute. He looks like model but the things he does are really cute.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Jo Ara with cold eyes. He said with a strict voice.

“Don’t get weird thoughts. Didn’t I tell you not to think about things like relationships before you get to college?”

“Oh really, can’t I even say these things?”

“.....Don’t even look to his side. If you get close to him, only your life will get more tired. Although in the first place it wouldn’t happen, but just imagining it is horrible. Anyways, don’t even give him a glance because I’m totally opposed to it.”

“Leave it. Do you think that this is the Joseon Dynasty?”

Jo Ara grumbled and drank her tea. Next to Jo Ara, Gemma slightly glanced at her and carefully pushed a dish.

“Eat dis. It delicious.”

“Ah, yea. Thanks.”

Jo Ara opened her eyes roundly as if she got surprised and soon, she smiled merrily and received it. And after taking a bite, she smiled cheerfully and looked at Gemma. Jo Minjoon smirked and pinched Jo Ara’s cheek.

Gemma and Jo Ara started to converse with a sloppy English. But of course, the reason for the sloppiness was different, but the point that the both of them were enjoying it was the same.

As the night went on and the families returned to their rooms, only three remained on the tables. There was one candle lit as to make the atmosphere but.....nobody could enjoy it. Anderson stared at the candle and opened his mouth.

“You are leaving tomorrow?”

“Yeah.”

“Now I will be alone with her.”

Anderson trembled as if it was something terrible. Kaya said with a cold voice.

“Why do you act like you are the victim? The victim here is me.”

“Hmph. Even if my temperament is dirty, it’s not as much as yours.”

“I wonder. They say that you can see the nature of a person when you look at how they treat their family. I think that it’s really clear between you and me, and whoever sees it can see that difference. Isn’t that right Minjoon?”

Anderson glanced at Jo Minjoon. Instead of replying, he turned the sight away and scratched his head. Anderson grumbled.

“Shameless bastard. You even gave me a weird name but now, you don’t even take my side. Do you even have some conscience?”

“.....I do?”

“Even if he’s nicer than you, he should be at least a hundred times more.”

“.....If I stay between the two of you only I become the bastard. I will leave first.”

Anderson stood up. Kaya said while flinching.

“Today is Minjoon’s last day, you are really leaving?”

“What if it is? We can see each other later.”

Those were some hard hearted words, but in the end it meant that it wouldn’t end here. Anderson glanced back at Jo Minjoon and slowly said.

“The name of Anduksam you gave me..... I know that it is a weird one but I won’t throw it away. Because it was also me that said that it had an Asian feeling. From now on, everytime I meet a korean I will introduce myself with that name.”

“No, I don’t think there’s any need.....”

“There’s no need to feel sorry. Because I will also tell them that you were the one that gave me this name. So everyone in the world will point you about your human nature. This is my revenge.”

Jo Minjoon forced a laugh. Just where did that absurd revenge come from? Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson’s back getting farther away and said.

“Thanks for while, Anderson.”

Anderson’s feet stopped. He said while not turning back.

“Don’t make the atmosphere uselessly. Whenever it is, we are meant to meet each other.”

Precisely speaking, they would meet tomorrow. And even if tomorrow passed, they would see each other at the finals. However, it was something that Anderson couldn’t know. Jo Minjoon calmly smiled and said.

“I’m sorry.”

Anderson didn’t reply back. It could be that he didn’t have the words to reply back, or that he didn’t understand why he was saying sorry. The shadow disappeared along the silence and the ones that remained in the hall became Jo Minjoon and Kaya. The candle dropped melted wax and lit the table, and the side of the kitchen was deep in the dark with its lights turned off. Kaya saw at the space between the not properly closed door and said.

“It seems like the lights went off.”

“If you are talking about the kitchen, it did go off.”

“.....No, that’s not it. I’m talking about me. My front road. My life has always been like that. It was even difficult to look at tomorrow. No, there was one certain thing. Tomorrow wasn’t going to be that different to today. I thought that after I came to Grand Chef I became able to see the light, but I can’t see it again.

Minjoon.”

Kaya turned her head. Every time the fire flickered, the shadow of her face also flickered. However, her eyes didn't. Nor her voice. She said with a voice filled with more confidence than ever.

“It seems like you were my lighthouse.”

Jo Minjoon didn't say anything. It wasn't because he had nothing to say, rather it was because the moment he heard those words, he felt it difficult to breathe. Because that was what he thought of Kaya. No, precisely speaking, Kaya wasn't simply the one who brightened the road.

Kaya's road was also the one he wanted to walk on, and the dishes she made were also the ones he wanted to make. She was the object of that happiness, character, and adoration. Just looking at her made him difficult to breathe, but because of that, he could struggle even more because of the sense of loss.

That Kaya had said that he was her lighthouse. Those words.....if he said that it felt warmer than the praises and encouragement of the judges of the judges, would it be too excessive?

“.....I was your lighthouse.”

“Every time it was difficult, you were next to me. You even taught me what should I do..... You even blocked the paths that were wrong. Most of all, you sustained me so my heart didn't collapse. Thank you. When you left, I thought that I wouldn't be able to say these things to you ever.....That's why I'm telling you this. And I'm not doing it twice.”

“Me too.....”

He wanted to tell her that she also was his lighthouse. That she was still a lighthouse for him. However, those words didn't come out as easily. Jo Minjoon whispered many words that couldn't even be heard with his lips half opened, and it closely shut. Kaya

slightly tilted her head.

“What is it? Why did you stop in the middle of saying something?”

“It’s nothing. I just have nothing to say.”

To say those words, he felt really miserable right now. Because however he wrapped it up, it was still his loss. He wanted to say these words for when he reached the end of his road. Kaya laughed brightly. It was a girly smile that suited to someone her age.

“Hey, lighthouse.”

“What?”

“Even without you, will I be able to find the path?”

“Kaya.”

Jo Minjoon said with a soft voice.

“I’m not a lighthouse.”

“.....That’s not something for you to judge. At least for me, you were a lighthouse.”

“No. That’s not true Kaya. Even if I wasn’t here, you would still have been able to find the path. And you would have proved yourself just how excellent of a chef the person named Kaya Lotus is. You would think that you have lived your life without any meaning, but that was a struggle. It was a war that would have been difficult for normal people to survive. And you have done it. Your sister, she smiled quite prettily. You protected her so she could laugh like that.”

Kaya’s face became stifled. Did she have to get moved by it, or have to deny it. It was an expression that even she didn’t know about.

“And you shone, to the point that you didn’t shine your own path, but also for the others. That’s why I can’t become that lighthouse. There’s nothing more meaningless than my

lighthouse. So Kaya.....don't think that the reason you could climb all the way up to here is because you relied on me. It was all your own strength. Cooking, fighting and surviving, and enduring the scars. I just..... I was only the mirror that was next to you. The mirror that momentarily reflected your light."

"Why do you lower yourself that much? I....."

Her voice trembled. This was the first time that she got so dizzy even while getting praised. Kaya opened her eyes fiercely and said. It was ironical, but he thought that those fierce eyes was just her gentleness.

".....Fine. I won't say that I climbed all the way here because of you. Because my two feet are clearly fine. However, you grabbed my hands at the front. You pushed and pulled me. Why do you say as if that was nothing?"

"So you can win the last battle."

Jo Minjoon replied with a plain voice. It is different to before. The contents of the finals, and the process she walked. That's why he could only be anxious. He did trust in Kaya..... But he hoped that she wouldn't lose something that she should have gotten because of him.

"Anderson is strong, but I'm not saying that you are weaker than him. I'm just saying this. It's not enough being the Kaya Lotus that survived until now by relying on Jo Minjoon. You have to be the Kaya Lotus that can stand on her own to beat Anderson. Because Anderson also came all the way here by his own. So....."

"I don't want to."

Kaya replied shortly. It was an expression that she had gotten hurt. Her eyes seemed teary, and her face was red perhaps because of the candle light or because blood gathered on her face. Kaya clenched her fist. Beneath the fist that couldn't be seen by Jo Minjoon, there was countless emotions. And she wasn't planning

on opening her fist.

“Surviving by grabbing your hands is even more amazing than having survived on my own. It is amazing that I could grab that hand of yours! At least, it’s like that for me. So don’t prolong this talk when I’m grateful towards you. At least you.....I would like it if at least you weren’t that way.”

She did understand the words Jo Minjoon was trying to tell her. It was so with her head. However, her heart couldn’t be that way. Kaya stood up from her seat.

“I will win. Whatever me it is, I will definitely beat Anderson. So just don’t think about those useless things. Just.....”

As her voice got wet, in the end she could only shut her mouth. The words she wanted to say after that kept roaming silently in her heart. Kaya said with a dispirited voice.

“I want to sleep. See you tomorrow.”

Kaya left. Jo Minjoon just looked at the candle with an expression you couldn’t know. The sound of the footsteps kept getting farther. Was he expecting for those steps to come back? When he couldn’t hear anything, the sigh that came out of his mouth turned the candle off.

The fire of the candle died, but the weight of the sigh couldn’t be forgotten so easily.

Chapter 108: Arbitration Expenses (3)

The next day, there were no conversations between Jo Minjoon and Kaya. It wasn't because they didn't have anything to say. There were a lot of emotions and thoughts to say it all in that short time, and if they said something sloppily they could go astray and end there.

Because of that, Kaya could only treat Jo Minjoon with a blunt voice. Jo Ara whispered on Jo Minjoon's ear.

"Oppa, did you do something wrong?"

"Don't ask."

Seeing that the voice was dark really seemed like they had fought. In this kind of problems, if a third party said something it would be meaningless.

They hoped for something to happen so it removed that uncomfortable feeling between them.....But it seemed that time wasn't willing to wait for them. The staff told them that there wasn't much time left for the plane, and in the end they could only get on the plane.

Jo Minjoon looked at Grand Chef's house reflected outside of the car's window. He would be returning soon but.....as a participant and a member, this was the end. And as he thought like that, he felt deafened.

But it was now farewell. Jo Minjoon lowered his sight. Kaya and Anderson were looking at him. They would walk their own paths.

'Me too..... I can't fall back either.'

His feet tickled.

—

#Is Jo Minjoon's elimination an obvious result, or an unexpected thing?

Grand Chef also faced its third season. And the reaction towards it was so hot it was even difficult to compare it to the previous seasons, and to the point it was called as the 'best season'. What could be the reason of that hot reaction? Many viewers picked a 'character'.

For the three people with the clearest characters to have remained, it was quite a good development for the viewers and for the staff. But because of that, Jo's elimination left a lot of regret. It was because of the love the viewers gave him, but most of all because they didn't quite like the process he got eliminated.

When the 16th episode was broadcasted six days ago, the theme was 'cooking for your family. Thinking about the familiar image, it was a theme that could be given once. But the problem was on the point that a vague theme was a really big handicap for Jo.

First, Jo's identity was that of a foreigner that came from Korea. So his cooking could obviously show a Korean and foreign feeling. But until now, the judges showed quite a fastidious attitude when it came to foreign dishes, and this day wasn't an exception.

The reason the judges said was the factor of Jo's elimination was 'nervousness.' But what could be the reason that Jo was more nervous compared to the other two? Wasn't the unfamiliar meal one of those reasons? That was the public opinion. Actually, Jo's dishes were quite distanced to a formal Lorean meal. This also meant that Jo was taking into account the judges way of evaluating.

.....(ellipsis).....

They say that cooking can only be based on subjective judgement, but the reality was that Jo's elimination left some regret. They only hoped for Jo's trajectory from now on to ease that regret.

The final episode of Grand Chef season 3 will be broadcasted on the 13th of July at 7 PM, as a live broadcast.

2010.07.07 – Angela Eve

“Is it this person again.....”

When he thought that someone wrote a quite a good article, there were many cases where he saw the name Angela Eve. She was really comparable to that Jessica that appeared out of nowhere at the restaurant on the past.

Jo Minjoon let out a long sigh. The breath surrounded the face hotly because of the mask and it disappeared. July. Even if it was New York, it shouldn't be that cold. The sun rays were warm, and there were many people with short sleeves. Aside from that, it wasn't even outside, but inside the airport. However, Jo Minjoon only had to keep wearing the mask.

It wasn't to look cool, or that he caught a cold. As he walked with his bare face, there were a lot of people that approached him as they recognized him. Honestly speaking, he rather liked it at first..... but it was really exhausting. A familiar voice was heard next to him.

“You are reading an article again.”

“She writes well. This person.”

“If you keep worrying about that, you will get sick.”

“You really grew up, worrying about your oppa and all. How was it, was America fun?”

“.....Don't speak like you are a resident. You haven't even gone to many places.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly instead of replying. After leaving Grand Chef, Jo Minjoon took Lee Hyeseon and Jo Ara to various places. He showed them the Grand Canyon they wanted to see, and also Hollywood's signboard. The ending was at New York. Of course, they also ate various dishes. Lee Hyeseon said with a regrettable voice.

“It would have been good if your dad was also here.”

“He can always come later.”

“.....When are you planning on returning to Korea?”

“For now, I think that I will go back after the finals end. But..... Regarding on the schedule of the following program, it may change.”

“Wherever you go, don’t lose yourself. I’m happy that you are doing well.....but at the same time, I feel uneasy. There are a lot of eyes directed at you. And among them, there will be many that have enmity against you without reason. But don’t get shaken and don’t be scared. You understand me, right?”

“Yes. I do.”

At that moment, the announcement of the plane was heard. It was announcing that it would soon leave. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and said.

“You will have to leave now. Time is up.”

“.....Right. Be well. If anything happens, call me.”

“Don’t worry. Nothing will happen. And I will call you.”

“Oppa.”

Before going to the security check, Jo Ara called him for the last time. Jo Minjoon just looked at her. Jo Ara smirked and said.

“Kaya was prettier than on the screen. Anderson was also handsome.”

“.....What?”

“No, I’m just saying.”

Even before he could say something at the unexpected words, Jo Ara disappeared while getting pushed by the line. Jo Minjoon turned back with a dirty face. He also had to slowly leave to Chicago. Today was the 7th and the finals was on the 13th. The day

Martin asked him to come to Grand Chef's house was today. It wasn't only him, but the other 7 that got in the top 10 must also have gotten the same call.

‘Am I meeting them again?’

—

The word ‘magazine’ made you think up of an analogic susceptibility and coolness. The coated pages, and the words next to the pretty model. Of course, depending on how provocative those words were, the level of that magazine was also felt differently.

“.....This magazine is also trash.”

Kim Dongbin frowned while chewing beet and salad with a pure he didn't know the identity of. After he became a chef's magazine reporter, there was one thing he became accustomed to: eating alone and solving the meals outside. However he just couldn't get accustomed to putting a not delicious dish, no, something similar to a dish inside his mouth.

The dishes kept coming out. Sea mussel soup, pork souvigne. However even after eating that, Kim Dongbin's face still wasn't bright. It was to the point that the employee that was at the hall started to get aware.

— A feeling of having eaten an industrial art made with a piece of paper that seems like a pretty dish. The service and the atmosphere was good, but the dishes are trash. A restaurant that you would only come to get the right atmosphere, and if not, a restaurant that isn't worth it. The grade is between the lowest and low. Most of all, the linguine that's so salty it's painful.....

‘.....I will have to write it when I go back.’

It was to the point that just being seated here made his mood worsen. And when he saw the receipt and the price of 65 thousand won (60 dollars), his mood became even worse. The cashier smiled

brightly and asked with a clear voice.

“Was the food delicious?”

“.....It was fine.”

He couldn't say that it was delicious. He hit around the bush saying that it was fine, but the cashier understood. Because customers like him wouldn't have been one or two. The smile didn't disappear, but it could clearly be seen that the expectation in the smile of the cashier disappeared. To feel consoled at that truth, was he a really timid consumer?

“How can they sell those things and receive money? They really like it by selling it for 65 thousand won. With just 6.5k won I could have ate a Korean dish.”

The grumbling didn't stop until he returned to the magazine house. The intern, who was eating a cup ramen in his seat, saw Kim Dongbin and laughed awkwardly.

“Is it a failure again?”

“These taste house scammer blogger bastards..... You really don't have anywhere to call a taste house and set that up? Ugh, why aren't they getting bankrupt? Is the building from the owner? No, even if it's his, it's too much. He would get a lot more money if he rented it to anyone rather than doing that on that time.”

“Isn't it that you have a romance of your own? A kind of a hobby in life.”

“Hey, even if I have some for delicious things, I don't for disgusting ones. Even if it's a secluded mountain district with the beautiful sound of bugs and grass, depending on whether there is a tile roofed house or a straw thatched house, the genre may come and go between thriller and a recovery spring.”

At Kim Dongbin's words, the intern couldn't say anything and just scratched his cheek. Kim Dongbin glanced at the interns notebook and looked at the video that showed on the screen. There

were familiar foreigners dressed up with chef uniforms and quite good dishes passed through the screen. Kim Dongbin extended his head and said.

“Is this that? Grand Chef.”

“Yes. There was also a Korean participant called Jo Minjoon, but he got eliminated this time. Speaking of which.....”

The intern said with a courteous voice.

“Now that he got eliminated he should soon come to Korea, so how about we get an interview with him?”

“Hey, we are a magazine that is quite recognized. What do you want to do by bringing a kid that couldn’t even win an amateur competition?”

“But he has an absolute sense of taste, so shouldn’t it be fine? Speaking realistically, it’s something that not even chefs can get in their careers.”

“Speaking about the career is for when he becomes a good chef later on. In the first place, who will prove that it’s not made up?”

“We can test him. And if we treat him as a rising star chef, there won’t be any problems.”

“We have a lot of things to write right now. Let’s not prolong our work for nothing and focus on our work. And don’t pour the ramen soup on the keyboard.”

Kim Dongbin put back the intern’s depressed face and went back to his seat. As he wrote down the bitter critics about the restaurant he went, the words the intern told him roamed in his ear. He minimized the tab he was working in and turned on the internet. And as soon as he searched for the name Jo Minjoon, a provocative related search appeared.

Absolute sense of taste Jo Minjoon.

It was just like a setting like he was the main character of a

cooking manga.(TL: It says manhwa, but well) (PR: I call it chuuka ichiban) He did tell the intern if it wasn't set up or what, but he also knew really well that there would be no way. There was no reason for top class chefs that are famous to participate on a set up on a well going broadcast like Grand Chef.

And looking at the cooking process and the results, compared to his age it was quite a good feeling. And he also had quite a lot of fans. Maybe it was because of his handsome and calm looks, or because of the genius like and mystical feeling the absolute sense of taste gave. Whether it was inside or outside of their country, there were extremely few people that disliked him.

‘He has a popularity that’s comparable to a star chef even before debuting.’

It was at that moment when he was feeling awe and bitterness at the same moment about the power of the broadcasts. He mumbled with a low voice.

“A rising star interview.....”

The sound of the mouse clicking didn't stop for a long while.

Chapter 109: Reunion In Front Of The Door

(1)

“I’m saying it once again, but if you decided once, you won’t be able to modify it. It means that you will have to keep the recipe as it is and not only the concept of the course. Will you be fine with this recipe?”

Martin asked, and Kaya nodded.

“I have thought on only that for 10 days and have wondered about only that. If only a revelation doesn’t fall on the skies, it won’t be able to be changed anymore. No, perhaps this would be a recipe that already received that revelation.”

“Hm, fine. I will take it.”

“So just when are you planning to tell me the method of the mission? I won’t be cooking all of those courses in a few hours all alone.”

“Don’t get anxious. You will get to know all of that tonight.”

“Tonight?”

Kaya frowned. Did that mean that he would announce it tonight? She couldn’t know. Precisely speaking, she couldn’t understand why they weren’t telling them and decided to tell them only now. Anderson, who was next to her, shook his head.

“Don’t protest like a kid. They would have done it because they already have something planned. Why, do you think that they won’t tell you just to make fun of you?”

“.....I didn’t ask you.”

Kaya replied as if she was growling. Martin smirked. Just like everyone expected, as Jo Minjoon, who was the connecting link, disappeared, the two of them started to clash like cat and dog.

“Go rest. I don’t recommend you getting mentally exhausted for fighting meaninglessly.”

At Martin’s words, Kaya and Anderson looked at each other unsatisfactorily and walked upstairs tottering to their respective rooms. Kaya locked the door and hugged her knees while sitting on the bed. She didn’t like that she couldn’t do anything right now. Hopelessness? Perhaps, expressing it like sense of lethargy was more correct. She would rather prefer doing the mission right now.

“.....Chloe, Minjoon, Marco, and uh..... What was it again?”

Her memory about the names of the others was already blurry. Actually, they weren’t even close, and looking at it like that there was nothing weird. But those three were her friends. She wanted to see them as much as her family.

Kaya took out her cellphone. As she looked at the few names that contained the screen, her eyes stopped on the name Jo Minjoon. After the fight on that day, no, the vague conversation that couldn’t be considered a fight, the relationship between the two became awkward. It wasn’t that they hadn’t contacted each other at all, but there were many cases where they respected the stuffy silence without even being able to say anything and the conversation ended.

And because of that, the name she pressed in the end was Chloe’s. She thought that the tone was ringing for quite long, but soon a panting sound was heard. Kaya said cautiously.

“Chloe.....?”

[Haa... haa.....Yeah, tell me. Huph.....]

“Are you exercising again?”

[No, that’s not it..... Huph, I was going somewhere, but the car stopped, whew, on a hill..... I’m walking for quite a while now.]

“.....Should I call you later?”

“ No, nono. I will arrive soon. I’m almost there.]

Chloe said that, but Kaya didn’t add anything on purpose. Because her breath sounded really short winded. How much longer would she have heard her breath? Chloe was slowly taking in some air and then opened her mouth.

[But why did you call me for?]

“I’m bored. And I feel stuffed. Being with that bastard Anderson just stresses me. To call Minjoon.....”

Kaya paused for a moment. She just scratched her fingers and changed subjects.

“Anyways, that’s why I called you for. But where are you going? Looking that it’s a hill, did you go travelling?”

[Hm, it’s similar.]

“How good. I also want to travel. Thinking about it, I have never gone once on my life.”

[What are you saying? There was that time with the food truck, and also being at Grand Chef’s house right now is travelling.]

“That’s true.....but anyways, it’s not that good right now. A trip where there is only Anderson. It’s horrible.”

Chloe replied with an awkward laugh. She wasn’t the type to side with the back sayings of someone. Kaya let out a sigh.

“So where did you go to? Looking that you said that there was a hill, it feels like you went to the west.”

[In front of your door.]

“Huh? What?”

[I came in front of your door.]

At that moment, a knock was heard. Knock, knock knock, knock. Kaya looked at the side of the door dumbfoundedly. Chloe said with a teasing voice.

[Delivery.]

—

Starting with Chloe, all the past eliminated people started to gather one by one. Joanne and Ivanna, Hugo, Olivia, Sasha, etc. showed themselves, and the result of that was that all of them gathered on the lobby of the 4th floor like usual. Kaya was stuck next to Chloe and was forcing the smile not to show. She felt so good she couldn't even think anything about the mission.

“It feels good.”

Kaya said briefly. Even if she was honest on bad things, she was someone that couldn't be honest on good things. So for that kind of Kaya to say that, there was some kind of weight on those words. Anderson opened his mouth slightly.

“There are at least 6 days until the finals, so gathering everyone like this..... Is it what I'm thinking about?”

“I wonder. Even we didn't hear the details. But I'm also guessing what you are thinking about.”

Hugo replied. He was wearing glasses compared to before. Ivanna asked carefully, as if it was bothering her for a while.

“Hugo, did your eyesight get bad?”

Hugo stucked his finger inside the inner parts of the glasses instead of replying and smirked. Looking at the finger that passed clearly, Ivanna nodded as if she assented to it. Sasha said with a voice full of envy.

“I did think that you two were strong..... But there really were no upsets. In the end, you even survived until the end.”

“Well, my skills were good.”

“.....Shouldn't you normally be saying that you were lucky?”

Even at Sasha's pointing out, Kaya 'hmp'h'ed with confidence and smiled. Perhaps, that dignity could be her charm. When did they

get this accustomed to her? But one thing was certain.

‘She’s not a bad kid.’

At first, they misunderstood her a lot. Her mouth was rough, and her actions were even rougher. However the more they knew of her, she was just like a cute porcupine. She did elevate her spikes because she was scaredy, but if you just calmed her down, those spikes became soft feathers. She was that kind of porcupine.

Footsteps were heard by the stairs. They all looked at the stairs with expectant eyes. Who is going to come now? The answer came soon. A black and shaven head flickered at the end of the stairs. And soon, when the huge body showed up, everybody put welcoming smiles on their mouths.

“Marco!”

Chloe and Joanne approached and hugged him. Even if two people extended their arms, they couldn’t embrace him properly, but the moment they hugged him they realized one thing. That it wasn’t only one person that got up the stairs. He was hidden behind Marco’s big build, but behind him there was Jo Minjoon. He smiled awkwardly and said.

“Are you also hugging me?”

“Uh, uh.....”

“It’s a joke.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Chloe getting perplexed and Jo Minjoon hurriedly said. Chloe extended her hands.

“Give me your luggage! It looks heavy.”

“.....It’s a carrier?”

“You came up the stairs carrying it. You shouldn’t even have the strength to drag it.”

“Because I don’t have muscles, it’s not that I don’t have that much strength..... But well.”

He gave her one of the carriers and smiled.

“Thanks if you help.”

Chloe blushed and hurriedly walked away. The moment Jo Minjoon followed Chloe’s back, he looked at the other people. The moment Kaya made eye contact with Jo Minjoon, she turned her head away as if she was a kid that stole a candy stealthily. Hugo, that was looking at the both of them, Hugo laughed ill naturedly and turned to look at Kaya.

“While we didn’t see them, the atmosphere became quite hot. Kaya, isn’t it dangerous?”

“Shut up.”

Her eyes, that was painted in black, contorted. She couldn’t loosen her fierce eyes even after Chloe and Minjoon returned. Rather than being angry at them, it was closer to being angry at herself... at herself that couldn’t do anything.

Jo Minjoon also felt this place was uncomfortable. Chloe had confessed to him, and he had kind of fought with Kaya. The others also weren’t blind. There was no way they couldn’t see what was happening. Joanne whispered to Anderson.

“Hey. Did something happen between them while we weren’t here?”

“I don’t know.”

“Ah, why don’t you? You should have kept being with them.”

“You, do you remember everything I did when you were with me? No, do you know it all?”

“.....I don’t.”

“It’s the same.”

After Anderson’s words, she shut her mouth. Joanne pouted her lips and just observed Chloe. The thing that made her stop looking at her was the entrance of Robert. He looked at the participants

and said.

“Come down to the kitchen. It’s okay if it’s only for a moment. The judges also arrived.”

“.....I already got eliminated, but why am I nervous again?”

Marco placed his hand on his chest and breathed in. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and said.

“It’s because you treat the competition of others as seriously as if it was yours. And thinking about standing in front of the judges, even going there as a customer will make you feel nervous.”

“I really think that would be the case.”

If they were to go to Joseph’s and Alan’s restaurants later on, they thought that they really wouldn’t be able to eat comfortably.

They felt restless while going down to the kitchen. In the case of Jo Minjoon, he returned after two weeks passed, but for the others it was much more. So obviously, while thinking about the memories of this moment, it could only hurt one corner of their hearts because they were now here as a support.

And no one on earth could get satisfied by being a support. They wanted to become the stars, the protagonists. Who could be free by feeling like that, on that greed?

He remembered some words he heard a while ago though he forgot if it was on a drama, or on an essay. The director had said that everyone wanted to become the protagonists of their own lives but not anybody could become it. That they just watched their lives instead of living it. The protagonist is the one that receives the most love, so the protagonists of their lives couldn’t be them but rather the ones they loved.....It was that kind of word.

When he first saw those words, he thought that those were some made up words to feel more romantic. However, he thought that he could kind of understand those words because it was hard to receive it. He still wanted to become the protagonist, and loved

himself the most. That was how greedy he felt when he saw the path Kaya and Anderson were walking.

And it was difficult for it to always become the right path. Jo Minjoon put down his greed. He tried hard to do so. At the hard clenched fist, a soft skin passed by. He got surprised and turned to look, and he saw Chloe also getting surprised and turning to look at him.

“Sorry.”

“No.”

An awkward silence flowed between the two of them. Jo Minjoon asked with a low voice.

“Don’t you feel regret?”

“What?”

“That you couldn’t become the protagonist here.”

“If I tell you honestly, you won’t say anything, right?”

“.....Is it something that seems like I would say something?”

Chloe took in breaths for a moment. They had already gone down the stairs were close to the door of the kitchen.

“It’s an undeserving seat for me. Ah, I’m not intending to depreciate myself. Compared to Kaya and Anderson, the time I poured my passion and heart are weaker. I still have to accumulate a bit more. You know about the law of counter reaction, right? You push the rock, but if you don’t have the strength to do it, you are the one that rather gets pushed back. It’s the same as greed. If you don’t have the skills and want to have it without any definite plans..... You will also lose what you have right now. So I don’t get greedy.”

“.....How cool.”

“Hee, thanks.”

Chloe smiled merrily. At least on this moment, it felt like the awkwardness all disappeared. The door to the kitchen opened. The participants lined up naturally and got in the kitchen. The judges were all putting welcoming smiles on their faces. Emily said.

“I feel really good meeting you again like this. All of you should be really busy, thanks for making some time.”

“I think that you should be really curious. If you came for us, for yourselves, or to be helpers.”

Honestly, they weren't that curious. Because the situation was really obvious. And that showed up right on their faces. Martin let out a sigh at a side as if it was regrettable. They could put on a more curious face.

“I will first tell you the results. You wight will split in half and team up with Anderson or Kaya. And you have to cook the recipes designed by them and serve 50 customers and us. And.....”

Alan paused for a moment and looked at Joseph. Joseph smiled brightly and elevated his voice.

“And those 50 customers are chefs that represents the 50 states of America. Getting recognized by them is no different than being completely recognized on the business circle on this country.

At those words, not only Kaya and Anderson, but all the other 8 shone their eyes. If it was as they had said, the word the directors said when they brought them made sense. ‘Opportunity’. They weren't only going to help Kaya and Anderson, but it could also become an opportunity for them. Aside from appeals, getting acquaintanced was an amazing thing by itself.

“One week.....No, precisely speaking there are 6 days left. You will have to completely master Kaya's and Anderson's recipe in that time and satisfy the chefs. And of course, there would be one process left before that. Right, Emily?”

Emily slowly looked at the ten of them. And then she said with a

calm voice.

“We will arrange the teams.”

Chapter 110: Reunion In Front Of The Door

(2)

“The methods are simple. First, you will secretly vote for who you want to cheer for between Kaya and Anderson. The person that gets more votes will be able to pick their teammates first. Only, the person that gets selected has the right to decline, if they aren’t the last one.”

“.....Isn’t this really close to a popularity vote? Even so, it’s a final.”

A weird voice came out. It was Hugo. At his remark, Joseph smiled brightly and replied.

“That’s right. A popularity vote. And that popularity would change according to how they treated the ones they have been together for the past few months. Human nature, attractiveness, and skills are one of the most important skills for the chef. This mission is just like that.”

Joseph looked at every one of them.

“It’s final. If it’s simply comparing cooking skills, doing it as a team method would be inefficient. Because according to the skills of the members, there would also be a big difference in the results. But even so, we chose to go with the team battle. Because in the end, all the restaurants are like that. There are two head chefs. One cooks well but doesn’t have the skills to lead the kitchen, and one cooks less well but leads the kitchen well. What restaurant would be more delicious?”

“.....The latter one, right?”

“It’s just that. Individual skills, are of course important. But the most important thing, realistically speaking, is the ability to lead the kitchen. And the person who wins this competition, will act as a head chef that leads all the kitchen and not only one section.

They will act as a Grand Chef. As much as the ability for a performer is in demand, the skills for a director are also in demand.”

Silence flowed for a moment. Jo Minjoon silently looked at Kaya and Anderson. How well will the two of them show their features as a head chef.....

‘Would Kaya have grown more?’

It was different from when they first met, but he did get worried about her making trouble or not. In the case of Anderson, he didn’t particularly have any worries. Although he was mean, he was an adult that carried out his role perfectly.

The voting proceeded. There were no upsets on the name Jo Minjoon wrote on the piece of paper. ‘Kaya’. Even if he got closer with Anderson, it wasn’t as much as Kaya. In the first place, his fandom toward Kaya was also deep.

‘Who will win?’

It wasn’t about the competition, but about the votes. Jo Minjoon thought that it would rather be Anderson. Although they both were mean, taking into account the intensity of it, honestly speaking Kaya was more.

Their eyes, who saw the voting, shone in curiosity. Two votes for Kaya, three for Anderson, one for Kaya, and..... Two for Anderson. 5:3. It was Anderson’s win. Kaya pouted her mouth with a dispirited face. Emily smiled.

“Good. Anderson got the first right of choice. Who are you thinking of choosing? On top of that, you have to take into account that the adversary can decline. And that means that..... If the person is certainly in your team, it can be better to call them the latest possible.”

Anderson just looked at the people. Combining cooking skill, personality, style, etc. the person Anderson needed the most was

Jo Minjoon. In the case of Chloe she leaned more towards Asian cuisine rather than Western, but in the case of Jo Minjoon, he was well-balanced overall.

‘There’s no way that fanboy comes to me.’

Even now, Jo Minjoon was glancing at Kaya. If that was the case, there weren’t many people left. He felt that Marco or Sasha were quite fine for desserts, but it was something that ended when Kaya chose one of the two. Because thinking the effectivity of it, she wouldn’t take the two of them.

“Chloe. Help me.”

In the end Anderson opened his mouth. Although Chloe’s inclination was a bit different, she didn’t fall back at all when it came to the basics.

Chloe bit her lip. She wondered. Because she was one of the people that voted for Kaya. Just like it was for Jo Minjoon, Chloe was also closer to Kaya rather than to Anderson. The memory about Kaya trembling wondering if they could meet again later on, that was before the mission, was still clear.

She felt like a friend, and a little sister. But to hard heartedly ignore him, she remembered the time when Anderson helped her. The day when she got eliminated, he received the call that didn’t even come, and made her some time to be with Jo Minjoon. Thinking about that, she felt sorry to act ruthlessly. Because she was basically a gentle person. She was a person that wasn’t loyal to her feelings to the point she looked like a dumb person.

However.

“I’m sorry. This time, I want to be next to Kaya.”

Chloe declined. She felt sorry for Anderson, but now, she also wanted to change. She wanted to do what she wanted, and say what she wanted. So when she walks like that step by step, one day she would change to the point she wouldn’t be able to remember

her past.

In the end, the next person Anderson called was Hugo. Kaya called Joanne. In the case of Jo Minjoon or Chloe, they would be with her whenever she called them, no, in the first place there was no need to call them. Anderson called Sasha next and Kaya called Marco. Olivia and Ivanna went to Anderson's team..... And Chloe and Jo Minjoon got into Kaya's team.

“The teams have been decided. From now on, you will have to practice, and keep practicing. Think that the five of you have made a restaurant.”

“It won't flow in a comfortable atmosphere. There's a saying that the kitchen is the smallest country. There would be many things which you agree on, and there will also be many different things to what you thought. Most of all, the most difficult thing will be acting on your own. Although you will know it well because you have been through that quite some times..... But the final mission will fill you with more nervousness than usual. Live broadcast, and customers who are all renowned chefs. It would be good to prepare your hearts.”

Joseph talked until then and gave Martin eye signs. Martin opened his mouth.

“Cut!”

—

“.....Watermelon gazpacho, langostin with buttermilk pure and carrot pure as garnish, seared pumpkin along with tortellini, artichoke carpaccio along with turkey scallopine, and tart tatin and sorbet for dessert.....”

Jo Minjoon organized the orders of the recipe in his head. And then smiled. The average score and the composition score were all were all superior and refined. But what made him smile wasn't on that point. It was because he felt that he was still embracing the

philosophy Kaya said before.

“She said that she wanted to make a restaurant that you can go to and that there’s no need to see. Even this recipe shows that.”

“.....You are still remembering that? So embarrassing.”

Kaya blushed and scratched her neck. She glanced and said.

“Do you think it will be fine?”

“It’s something you have thought well about. It will obviously be fine.”

“Then, good.”

“How are you planning on doing the division of the roles?”

Chloe asked. Kaya leaned her chin on her interlocked fingers with a ‘hm’ and opened her mouth.

“I think that it will be good to first do their own recipes, and go with the part that they are the most specialized in. They said that we were able to do the pre-preparations.....Even so, won’t we need a person to help at times for when we are preparing?”

“Shall we think while doing it?”

“First, let’s talk it through. We organize our thoughts and relieve some stress. How have you been well? Minjoon, they say you travelled.”

“Even if it’s travelling, everywhere is about the same.”

“I also want to travel later on. I have never travelled.”

“I have already heard those words quite a few times. You will soon be able to. You will now get famous, No, you already are. It isn’t only on the US, but won’t places around all the world call you?”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, Kaya unconsciously smiled merrily and hurriedly lowered the corner of her mouth.

“I’m not that drunk on my dreams.”

“I know. So don’t get that serious.”

“.....Marco. What are you doing nowadays?”

“Uh.....That’s.”

Marco beat around the bush. It wasn’t because he didn’t have to words to reply, but rather he felt a big need to want to say it that it rather didn’t come out. Marco put a smile on that big face of his and said.

“Actually, I think that I may get in charge of a cafe. I’m obviously not the owner, but as a chef and patissier. It’s not that famous because it made anew, but even so it will be my first store.”

“.....You will become a cafe master?”

Joanne looked at Marco with a surprised expression. It was at that moment.

“Who will become what?”

Anderson approached. Precisely speaking, it was Anderson and his team. Joanne opened his mouth with a strict voice.

“Don’t spy.”

“Is there any meaning on doing that in this mission?”

“.....Thinking about it, there’s none.”

“Tch, so what are you talking about? Marco became a head chef?”

At Anderson’s question, Marco hurriedly shook his head.

“It’s too excessive saying that I’m a head chef.....I’m just a chef on a town cafe.”

“How amazing. Getting that upfront.”

“.....It’s not something you should be saying.”

Jo Minjoon forced a laugh and said. Anderson frowned.

“What about me?”

“You came to the finals. Do you know how much worth does this have?”

“If I can’t win, I will be the same as you.”

“For what reason are you that unconfident? Normally, you would be saying that you will obviously win.”

Anderson didn’t reply. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson’s teammates. Hugo, Ivanna, Olivia, and Sasha. If there was something that changed was that Hugo had grown compared to before. And of course, the proof he knew that was simple. Because the system was telling him so. Hugo’s cooking level was 7.

But of course, Kaya’s team was much better on potential. Although simply reckoning that their force was higher just with some numbers was as meaningless as numbering a soccer player and the team with stats..... But even so, it became one of the basic things. Looking at the system’s standard, Kaya’s team couldn’t lose.

‘I won’t make her lose.’

Whatever happened, he wouldn’t call for any variables for this final. Anderson said a few more words and left the place. They also had some things to talk about. Jo Minjoon’s eyelids got deeply closed and opened again. Chloe slightly looked at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“Are you tired?”

“No, my eyes were tired for a moment.”

“Should I brew you a tea? I’m practicing nowadays.”

“No, it’s okay. When are you going to get down to the kitchen and get here again?”

“.....You still have the scar.”

At Chloe’s words, Kaya turned her eyes away. Jo Minjoon placed his hand on his neck for a moment.

“Well, it’s a glorious scar.”

“As I looked into it, I found that there were tattoos for healing scars. Have you thought of doing that?”

“I wonder. If it’s really ugly to look, I should.....Is it that ugly?”

“No.”

Chloe hurriedly replied. And said along a pathetic smile.

“It’s cool. A scar you got while saving someone. Who won’t say that that’s not cool? And it’s not that noticeable. It looks roughly like a speckle.”

“Speckle.....”

“Anyways, it’s fine. However, don’t receive any more injuries. If you get more, I may really say that it’s ugly.”

Just why did she, worrying with a sniffing voice, feel so cute? But of course, rather than snot running, her voice would be basically like that. Jo Minjoon smiled softly. To be able to maintain this warm relationship with someone that he had rejected the confession.

“I’m always thankful. And sorry.”

“It’s fine to be thankful, but don’t be sorry. If there’s someone that feels sorry because of me, I also start to feel sorry for that person.”

“Understood.”

Silence flowed between them for a moment. No, it wasn’t between the two of them, the other five had their mouths shut. Maybe it was because they didn’t have anything to say, or because it was hard to even say something. Joanne opened her mouth.

“Should we do what we always did?”

“.....Badmouthing Anderson behind him?”

Kaya asked instinctively. Joanne giggled and shook her head.

“That’s also good, but let’s put things on our mouth rather than spitting things.”

Joanne made a beak like shape with her hands and brought it to her mouth.

“Let’s eat.”

Chapter 111: Reunion In Front Of The Door

(3)

Jo Minjoon didn't like crawfish. More specifically, he didn't dislike the flavor, but how it looked because it looked like an insect. That's why, when peeling off the shell of the tail of the half-cooked langostino, the Norway lobster, his hands couldn't be fast. Joanne looked at him and smirked.

"You are quite the scaredy cat?"

".....It's a bit disgusting."

"What disgusting? Look how cute it is."

Joanne raised the sautéed langostino with a calm face. Then, she peeled off the shell with skillful movements, and took out the meat.

"See? It's this easy."

".....I know."

"Get accustomed to it quickly before the finals."

At Joanne's words, Jo Minjoon let out a sigh for a moment and started to handle it with determination. He didn't want to look like coward. After taking out the meat and refrigerating it, it was the time of the secondary ingredients. And that was the reason Jo Minjoon got in charge of the langostino, which he didn't even like. Because there were many things that was easy to change the flavor, just like purée, foam, etc.

Sauce. It wasn't only one kind of it. In the sauce field like carrot purée, buttermilk purée, and buttermilk foam, Jo Minjoon could perform it the most perfectly. He followed the normal recipe that was Kaya's, but they were free to change the density according to their judgments.

'I can make purée better than anyone.'

But of course, taking into account the whole world, there would be a lot people that did it better than him, but at least it was like that on this competition. He was confident on being able to beat Anderson and Kaya on giving flavor to sauces.

It was also about time he got confident. His cooking level was 7. His comprehension towards French cuisine, American cuisine, etc. had risen quite a lot. He was confident on harmonising the flavor an ingredient had with the flavor of the sauce, and knew what dishes were delicious when cooked. He could know understand at times the meaning it had when he cooked.

That's why Jo Minjoon was certain. He believed that Kaya could win. No, that he would bring victory towards Kaya. That he could prove himself.

The dish Kaya got in charge was gazpacho. Since gazpacho was a cold dish, it didn't matter if they made it ahead of time. It was much better to prepare that and check the condition of the dishes of the others.

Originally, that was what a head chef was. It didn't happen that they grabbed the pan or knife themselves, except if it was a small restaurant. It wasn't because of the awareness of superiority. Leading a kitchen was a much more difficult of a job than doing their own dish perfectly.

Just looking at Alan's case was like that. His cooking level was 8. Of course, even if he and Kaya were the same level 8, there would be some differences. But regardless of being level 8, he was running a Michelin star restaurant. That was because, aside of cooking skills, his strength for leading the kitchen was certain.

And on Jo Minjoon's eyes, Kaya was quite a fine head chef because she had her sense of taste. Jo Minjoon could know the cooking score at a glance with the strength of the system, but Kaya could completely understand the state of the dish with just slightly tasting the sauce. But it wasn't that she only depended on her

taste. She could know how well it was cooked just by looking at the external colour, and on those cases, she even sent it back without hesitating.

‘I shouldn’t need to worry.’

Jo Minjoon’s plating was simple but luxurious. He poured the purée on the plate as if he was drawing, and he placed the seared carrots with duck fat and sauteed langostinos. Next to the langostinos, he placed a sage leaf as if it was a tree, he put breadcrumbs with particles as thick as a railroad. He ended the plating after putting buttermilk foam above the langostino meat. And like that, the five dishes were made. Kaya pierced the langostino with a chopstick and nodded.

“Good. It’s done well.”

“It’s just the flavor you wanted, right?”

“Almost? Even so, the feeling is delicately different. For it to be the same recipe, but to change according on the hands of the cook, it is marvelous.”

“If you run a restaurant later on, take a chef that cooks as well as me. Then, at least you won’t receive any claims from the customers?”

“.....So confident.”

“There was no time I didn’t have confidence. I was just worried that my pride became arrogance.”

But he decided to not do that anymore. The gauge was simple. After Kaya’s fight, Jo Minjoon thought of a lot of things. And now, lowering himself became difficult. He needed a distraction. If Kaya was really depending on him, he would become the pillar for her to depend on. That kind of thought.

Jo Minjoon looked at his dish. The carrot purée, that seemed like melted orange juice, was drawn in a straight line and next to that the buttermilk purée was showing its small and round shape like

some macarons. It wasn't that he just made the shapes to be fine. The flavor was also recognized by Kaya.

"I won't.....fall back anymore. The road I have to walk on is clear, and the place I'm looking at is also clear. The thing I have to do is only one. To walk to the front."

"Right. I like that side of you better."

Kaya said while putting a proud expression. Rather than the wondering Jo Minjoon, she liked the bold Jo Minjoon that came out this much better.

The dishes started to be placed on the table one by one. There were five seats around the table filled with dishes. Marco just touched his fork as if he was wondering what kind of expression he had to show.

"It just feels like a buffet when it's a course cooking. No, should I say that it is a party?"

"What's the matter with that? Just eat it in order."

"What was the order again?"

"Gazpacho, langostino, pasta, turkey, and then sorbet and tarte tatin."

Excluding the gazpacho and pasta, they were all 8 points. The one who made the pasta was no other than Joanne. However, it was unavoidable. First, the score of the recipe of the pasta wasn't even 8. And even if that was the case, Joanne didn't have the skills to easily make 8-point dishes. If Kaya directed her on every point, it would be different..... But there was no guarantee that she would do well without any mistakes in front of 50 customers.

But even if it was 7 points, it didn't mean that it wasn't delicious. For example, thinking of samgyeopsal was like that. Even if it was grilled on good fire, it was impossible for the cooking score to pass 7 points. But no one would be able to say that it wasn't delicious. The pasta Joanne made, the tortellini was like that. It wasn't a

particularly outstanding dish. However, the ingredients on the dumpling were all alive, and on the seared pumpkin, a fresh sweet flavor was on it.

It was a clear and delicious, a good dish. So much that if she went just like this, there wouldn't be any problems.

And the other dishes were also the same. The turkey Chloe cooked had a dense aroma just like foie gras, and when eaten along artichoke gazpacho, you could feel the fibres of it and felt that you were eating duck meat wrapped in radish. And of course, the flavor was much more luxurious.

There was nothing to say about Marco's tarte tatin, sorbet, and before-meal bread. It was a bread that made you feel why Marco was Marco.

Actually, when normal people went to a luxurious restaurant, the thing they felt the biggest difference with normal restaurants was the bread. It would be weird to look at a secondary thing when you went to eat a dish, but it was unavoidable. Most of the luxurious restaurants couldn't help but to pay a lot of attention to the bread, and a just baked bread was a basic. The result of the bread's texture was that it turned out soft and that it maximized the aroma of butter and grains.

And right now, Jo Minjoon was feeling that aroma from the luxurious restaurants he had been from Marco's bread. Just like if your rice is good, you will be able to eat deliciously with basic garnishes, Marco's bread had a charm that made you happy without any kind of sauces or butter.

However, Kaya's face that tasted all of these things, couldn't be bright. But Jo Minjoon couldn't ask her the reason. He felt that the moment he asked her that, the invisible weight on Kaya's shoulder would turn real.

That night, or perhaps dawn, Jo Minjoon opened his eyes. He couldn't discern well whether he woke up or was just closing his

eyes and opened it. His body was tired, but his consciousness was clear. Because originally, your head would be the clearest after you slept for 3, or perhaps 4 hours.

As he grabbed his cellphone out of habit, he saw that the time was 3 in the morning. It was an excessively early time to open his eyes. He wasn't thirsty, but because of that he didn't even want to go to the toilet.

As he was about to close his eyes to go and sleep again, an alarm that popped on one corner caught his eyes. It was a message from Kaya.

[Kaya : Are you sleeping?]

It has been roughly 30 minutes since she sent the message. He wondered that she may wake up if he messaged her back, but his fingers were soon moving on top of the screen.

[Me : I just woke up.]

The reply didn't come back immediately. When his eyelids were getting heavier, his phone rang.

[Kaya : Ah, sorry. I saw it just now. You aren't sleeping again, right?]

[Me : I'm not. But what happened this late at night?]

[Kaya : I can't get asleep. I wondered if we should sing lullabies to each other if you also couldn't sleep. Reading some fairy tales is also fine.]

Jo Minjoon kept reading and re-reading the message with an astringent expression. Perhaps Kaya realized that, and quickly messaged back.

[Kaya : It's a joke. You got serious again, right?]

[Me : No.]

[Kaya : Look how you are lying. Leave it, turn on the lights and look at the mirror. Is your face fine?]

He wondered what was she saying so suddenly, but as he got ahold of himself he was already checking himself on the mirror as Kaya had said. His hair was a bit messy, but it was fine. The moment he was going to send a reply, a knocking sound was heard at the door.

“If you are fine, come out. Let’s have a time for two insomniac patients to sympathize with each other.”

“.....I will put on something. Wait.”

Jo Minjoon wore a hooded shirt and covered his hair. And as soon as he got out of the door, he laughed in spite of himself. Kaya was the same. A limp white hooded shirt with black pants. Maybe it was to hide her messy hair, but her hair popped out of her hood like some furred headdress. Kaya said while looking vigilantly.

“You aren’t going to tell me anything because I didn’t wash my hair at dawn, right?”

“Do I seem that obvious?”

“You are.”

“.....Thinking about it, I may be.”

Kaya’s pink gum appeared above her white teeth. When her mouth opened again, it wasn’t her gum, but her bright tongue.

“Do you want to talk for a moment?”

“You came here to do that.”

“Let’s walk for a moment. Should we go to the garden?”

The two walked towards the garden side by side. After only walking a bit, Kaya jumped up and down. She put her hands on the pocket of her hooded shirt and trembled.

“Ugh, even in summer the wind at night is cold.”

“That’s why you should have dressed properly. Shorts were too much. Should we go inside?”

“No, I’m fine. I even roamed with shorts on winter in New York. I won’t crumble with this much. I’m not that weak. I’m strong. Kaya Lotus..... Is that kind of girl.”

At her voice that turned bitter at the end, Jo Minjoon just smacked his lips without saying anything. It could clearly be felt that she was feeling uneasy. It was unavoidable. The finals. On the boundary of victory and elimination, one step could earn you everything, or make you lose everything. But of course, even if Kaya didn’t win, her future wouldn’t fall to hell.

“You will win.”

“How do you say it so easily?”

“Because I will make you a winner.”

“It’s kind of strange. To suddenly have gotten this confident.”

“I told you before that I won’t fall back anymore. We are cooks, and in the end, even if this road is complicated there is only one thing we have to do: to make delicious things. And my dishes are delicious.”

The moon was bright. It was a bright moonlight he hadn’t felt like this even once when he was at the city. The streetlamps were all turned off, but there was no problem on looking at Jo Minjoon’s face with just the moonlight. No, perhaps that wasn’t because of the moonlight. Because his face was spread brightly, it could be seen more clearly.

“I had forgotten this, but what I wanted in the end was that. It is also important for many customers to come to a cool restaurant..... But in the end, making a good dish was my dream. And now, I think that I half-accomplished that. So now, I should at least get some confidence.”

“.....I am sorry for last time. To have made a tantrum for nothing.”

“No. I understand. And now, I will tell you honestly. You saying

that I was your lighthouse, I felt happy. Only that it was difficult to receive it. Because if I was your lighthouse, I would have to light all the paths you took. I wasn't confident on doing that. No, perhaps I just lacked trust. On me, and on you."

He didn't know why, but while he was saying that, he felt like he was confessing a sin he had hidden for long. Kaya's eyes shone faintly. At that instant, he felt that she was crying, but she didn't. But her eyelids were trembling as if wanting to hold back something.

"Are you saying that..... You believe now?"

"Yes. I'm confident on being able to clean your path, and even if you can't do it, you are someone that can reach your dream. It's late, but I came to realize it."

"Promise me. Holding pinkies."

Kaya extended her right hand. Her pinky was trembling on the cold air.

"Make me win. At least for this competition, let me believe that you are my lighthouse and depend on you. That's everything I want. Can you....promise me?"

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya's pinky. It was a long, slender and white finger. Her nails were cut shortly, and the wrinkles between the spaces of the finger was sharp and shallow. Maybe it was because of the cold, but because her skin was originally like that..... Many places of the finger had turned bright red.

The pinky fingers of the two slowly intertwined. The feeling he got of Kaya's hand was cold, soft and smooth. And the thumbs extended. The thumb was slightly different to the pinky. The elasticity was stronger and rather than being smooth, it felt rough.

They each felt heat and cold at the same time. They themselves didn't know if their hand was cold, or the hand of the other was cold.

Even after the thumb separated, their pinkies couldn't do so easily. Something came between that small and thin skin. Was it simply heat and feeling, or was there something more than that?

Their hands separated. Slantly, and slowly. The finger that lost their pair hid in the fist. The two of them didn't say a word. The still silence was saying thousands of words instead.

Dawn. The weather was probably clear.

Today, the moon was closer to the street lamp.

5 days until the finals.

4 days.

3 days, 2 days, 1 day.

...

0 days.

Chapter 112: The Winner's Scale (1)

Chloe took in a long, deep breath. She tied her hair with a white bandana with flowers, and as she took on a white apron, she looked kind of boorish. The feeling got weirder as she stood next to Joanne since Joane stuck to the fashion of the '20s. They said that the fashion of that time was rather good, but in the end it was going back in time.

A striped white shirt, a brown cardigan, and a brown pelt floppy hat. It felt just like she was an American princess of that time. If they went to the mission like that it would have been quite a funny scene, but unfortunately that didn't happen. The staff lent them cooking uniforms, and the two of them lowered their heads as if they were disappointed.

"I wanted to show my fashion senses because it was the last time."

"Me too."

"How about going to a model audition later on?"

"I won't even be able to apply because of my low height."

At Jo Minjoon's joke, Chloe replied with a serious voice. Could she have really dreamt of becoming a model? Kaya looked at the uniforms for quite a while and then opened her mouth.

"Ours are better than theirs."

Kaya's uniform colour was black. On the other side, Anderson's team was white. Actually a bright colour would be better to notice if there was a stain on it, but if it was only for the looks, black was better. First, it made you look a bit slimmer.

When everyone changed clothes and gathered, Kaya opened her mouth. You couldn't feel the rebel and troublemaker side of her. Her voice was calm, still, and warm.

“Thanks, everyone, for having worked hard for the past 6 days and following my methods without saying anything. I will certainly win. No.”

Kaya took in a breath and spoke as if he was swearing.

“Let’s win.”

Everybody replied with smiles. They wondered if it wasn’t Kaya that had grown the most in this competition.

And it wasn’t talking about cooking skills. She had grown as a person. But of course, there would be some differences because everyone had grown. It was a competition they could only do so. In a short time they had to cook and keep cooking while putting their everything. They also had to cooperate with someone they hadn’t even talked at all, and sometimes they made things they were cooking for the first time. If they couldn’t grow in that extreme situation, that would rather be the weird thing.

Everyone calmed themselves and went toward the kitchen. You would ask if there was a need to feel nervous if it wasn’t even their competition, but they couldn’t. It was a place where famous chefs from all over the country were looking at them. If someone took an eye on them, then it meant that all of America would be looking at them.

Most of all they wanted to make Kaya the winner. Because whatever they did, they were a team right now. There was no one that bore ill intentions because she was doing better than them. At least, it was so between them.

As they got in the kitchen, there was one point that was different from before. The curtain that was between the hall and the kitchen disappeared. It meant that the chefs would check on how they would cook. Chloe clenched her fists. Her palms weren’t sweaty, but her heart was. It was also throbbing so much that every time she breathed, her chest hurt.

However, it was a good nervousness. Maybe expressing it as adrenaline rush would be appropriate. And that wasn't only talking about Chloe. It was a structure that made you feel like that. It wasn't only an ordinary open kitchen. They would be showing not only their skills to the best chefs recognized nationally, but also their efforts and the fruit of their labors.

They would be showing not only their skills to the best chefs recognized nationally, but also their efforts and the fruit of their labors.

Jo Minjoon took in a long breath. Inside the bulked up chest, many emotions swirled—nervousness, expectation, excitement—however when he exhaled, those things went away with the breath. There was only one thing that remained: resolve. And it wasn't resolve about winning, not even a resolution of wanting to make Kaya the winner. It was a really simple resolve.

‘Let's make something delicious.’

It was simple but really difficult to do. Even if he went with Korean, Chinese, or Western, in the end the thing he had to pursue was the same. On the mouth that even a fist can't fit in, he had to put in his life.

‘No, what I have to put this time isn't my life.’

It was Kaya's recipe, her thoughts, and her ideology. Then, what he was actually putting in would mostly be Kaya's colour. So what did he have to do now? Did he only have to copy the recipe like a machine? That was what Jo Minjoon thought for the past 6 days. What can I do to make an even better dish? When making food that wasn't his, but of another one, what kind of attitude did he have to hold?

The answer came from none other than music. Precisely speaking, it was from classic music. When he listened to Mozart's Violin Concerto No.3 he got inspired like Edison's light bulb.

The chance was simple. It was a short thought.

‘Certainly for Mozart, Hillary’s concert is the best.’

In the case of classic, even if it’s the same piece, it would completely change according to who the director and the performers were. And he wasn’t just talking about the interpretation with what he felt. The movement of the bow, the fierceness of the bowing, the sharpness and range that goes between the times. All of those little things were melted in the performer’s personality, and the result made a big difference.

But just because of that, no one could say that he wasn’t Mozart. Because in the end the melody was the same.

Kaya’s recipe was the partiture for him. Then, the thing he had to do basically was to understand the partiture and the composer. And that’s why he thought, what could Kaya want to express with this langoustine? What does she want to treat? What kind of flavor does she want to produce?

He investigated and analyzed, and then he understood. The flavor Kaya wanted to show but was having difficulty to say with words. He knew precisely what kind of feeling she wanted.

Now, it was perfectly recreating it up to where he could. The evaluation that came next was Kaya’s job. The evaluation would also change according to how well she cooked it. Jo Minjoon trusted in Kaya’s recipe, but it wasn’t because of the high score the system was telling. Because he had seen until now. He had eaten until now.

The judges were standing in front of the countertop. Joseph said with a calm voice.

“Tonight, this table will be filled with chefs from all over the country. Are you ready to satisfy all of them?”

“Yes. I am.”

Kaya replied without even hesitating for a bit. Joseph looked at

her as if it was surprising.

“You are more confident than usual. Even if it’s you, I thought that you would be more nervous in this stage.”

“I don’t want to become a fool in the kitchen because I was nervous.”

“Good. Keep that composure. Anderson, are you fine?”

“I’m certain that I’m calmer than Kaya.”

Maybe he didn’t want to lose to her, Anderson replied with a hard voice. But compared to Kaya, he had a face that was clearly nervous. Alan said with a casual expression.

“Remember. You aren’t alone right now. You have allies, and you have to lead them. Don’t even think the things related to the competition. The customers will soon come. I believe that you will show them a good side.”

Anderson shut his mouth. He didn’t want to make a dull mistake at a decisive moment. And right now, this moment was one of the most important in his life.

The mission started.

—

For each table, three chairs were placed. Some may say that having an even number of chairs was the best, but actually placing the chairs in a triangle was the ideal thing to be able to concentrate on the food and hold a conversation. It was easy to concentrate on the food, and was also comfortable to look at the people at the sides.

However, there was only one table that correspond to that. It was New York’s and California’s table. There were 50 states in America and there was one from Washington DC. If they divided themselves in 3, it would be normal to be able to divide it perfectly, but on their table there were only two people. New York touched

his beard mark arrogantly and grumbled.

“How does the guy that lives in Illinois, and in Chicago on top of that, get the latest?”

“Originally the people that calls people to their region get the latest. It should be similar.”

“Getting late is the secondary problem. I came to Chicago but I couldn’t even eat Chicago pizza. What kind of stupid thing is this?”

At New York’s grumbling, California laughed faintly. Her teacher, she met in a long while, still had that unshapely taste.

“Even if it’s that good, in the end it’s only a piece of cheese. Do you really want to put that thing in your mouth?”

“Keep eating dignified dishes in New York. There are times that you start to miss those explosive flavors. You are able to talk like that because you live like a resident in heaven in California.”

“You are making those dignified dishes yourself.”

“Originally, the things you make yourself tend to be not delicious. You have to eat something others made or take things from others for it to be delicious.”

“.....I won’t get mine taken.”

At California’s vigilant voice, New York twisted his nose with a ‘hmp’ and slowly looked at the kitchen.

“He’s Fabio’s and Amelia’s son, right?”

“Yes.”

“He looks quite detestable, i’m certain that he’s Fabio’s son.”

“Even so, he looks quite good? His body seems strong, and he’s manly.”

“.....He’s like a son for you. Don’t look him like that.”

“A son was too much! Let’s say that he’s like a nephew. We shouldn’t even have 20 years of age difference. And in the first

place, I haven't even looked at him with those eyes! And my son already go to primary school. He's not that big!"

"He looks hateable, it's certain that he's Fabio's son."

California said while assuming a prim air. New York just looked at the others instead of replying.

"Right, she is Maya."

".....You aren't talking about Kaya, right?"

"Ah, right. Kaya. You too get my age. The names start to feel similar."

"Why don't you call her Inka..... Well, leave it. First, how do you see the administration of the kitchen?"

"It seems sloppy."

"On what point?"

"First, they are serving the gazpacho to that ugly Texas guy instead of me."

".....Fine. The second?"

"The second is that the yells don't hurt your ear. Will you be able to listen anything when you concentrate?"

In the first place, it was common that people could show that concentration. California put a weird expression as if it wasn't convincing and looked at them.

"Is there someone you want to take?"

"Anderson. First, if I take him he would be able to at least fulfill the role of Sous chef. And if I teach him for a few more years, he would be able to take the role of head chef in a huge restaurant without problem. And....."

New York's words got cut. Kaya was pulling the kart and was serving the gazpacho on their plates. New York looked at Kaya still and asked.

“You said you came from New York, right? What market is it?”

“The southern free market.”

“Ah, the price over there is fine but the hygiene is bad.”

“Then go to somewhere with good hygiene but with bad prices.”

“Can I believe that the hygiene of this gazpacho is fine?”

“It may have gotten a bit dirty because of you spitting on it.”

Kaya finished serving the gazpacho and smirked when she looked at New York staring at her absent mindedly.

“Have a good meal.”

Kaya moved to another table. New York said with a depressed voice.

“Young people nowadays don’t have manners towards the elderly.”

“That’s also it, but it’s also a problem that you didn’t become a normal elder but a detestable one. Before you weren..... No, you were also like that back then.”

New York didn’t reply. He took a spoonful of the gazpacho and brought it to his mouth. At that moment, his eyes turned sharp.

“It’s a clear flavor.”

“Mm, that’s right. It’s delicious. Although it’s difficult for a gazpacho to not be delicious, it’s still good. The flavor of the watermelon is denser than a normal gazpacho.....”

“If the start is this much, it’s not bad at all.”

Anderson’s team’s dishes didn’t come out yet. There were 50 customers. Even if they formed a team of 5 people with assistants, it was difficult to make quality food. And it wouldn’t be different even if it was them. Normal kitchens tried to not lose the flavor and the amount of people they could handle were at most 30. But even so, it was possible on the repeated labor, the teamwork, and

the accustomed recipe.

That's why the chefs divided in two and were eating food of different teams. And in their case, they had to eat Kaya's dish first.

Then, the chef of Illinois arrived. The person that had white hair smiled and sat on his seat.

"I got a bit late."

"There's nothing left for you."

"That was a bit too much."

Illinois smirked and raised his spoon. New York said with a disliking face.

"It's a bit precious to give it to a latecomer."

"Looking that you speak like that it seems like it was made well."

"The ingredients are good. They didn't use ingredients that got sloppily limp. As I saw, the fermentation was also quite well done."

"Did they have time to ferment on a mission?"

"As I heard, there were some cases where they prepared the things that needed fermentation yesterday. And the dough for the bread is also like that. Good for us. We get to eat more delicious things."

The gazpacho soon showed the floor. Kaya approached and took out the dishes and then, served the langoustine Jo Minjoon cooked. Besides the sights of the chefs, Kaya started to calmly explain about the langostino.

"It's garnished with buttermilk purée and carrot purée. The foam on top is buttermilk foam. The langostino was sautéed once and roasted one side once more. If you enjoy the difference of the seared part and the opposite part, it will be more delicious."

"It's beautiful."

Illinois said with an admiring expression. Actually, looking at the

exterior of it was perfect. However that wasn't what he meant. It was the combination of the purée and the cooking state of the langostino. Illinois stained the langostin in purée, and after he ate a bite he smiled brightly.

“Your recipe is excellent, and your comrade that reproduced it without any flaws is also excellent.”

“Thanks. On top of that, Jo Minjoon was the one that made this langostino.”

“Oh.....It's that person, the one with the absolute sense of taste. Am I right?”

“Yes, and.”

Kaya smiled as if it was a bit embarrassing.

“He's the chef I admire the most.”

Chapter 113: The Winner's Scale (2)

The sights of the chefs got fixed on Kaya. And she looked at them as if there was a problem.

“What are those eyes?”

“.....You are saying such a thing with such a calm expression.”

“There are lot more things being said about me, will this much be a problem?”

“Good. I like your ambition. And I also like your dish.”

He said while pointing at the langostin. Kaya smirked.

“I told you. That it was made by the chef I admire the most.”

“But that admiration, is that possible? He got eliminated earlier than you. In conclusion that means that he's a worse cook than you..... If it were me, I wouldn't be able to admire him.”

At those words, Kaya's eyes became sharp.

“The reason why disciples admire their teacher isn't always because they are better than them. In the first place, Minjoon has many talents I don't. The reason why he got eliminated earlier than me is..... he was just unlucky. Because he was a foreigner.”

“I don't know about anything else, but I agree on what you said about admiring but not being better than themselves. There are teachers that even if they have good skills, they aren't admirable at all. And there are also teachers that although they don't have skills, they are admirable. I.....”

California glanced at New York. New York didn't return the sight, but it could be seen that he was quite aware of it.

“Well, I have a noncommitted teacher.”

“Hey! I brought you up that didn't even have experience and raised you well.....!”

“Why don’t I have experience? It had already been 10 years since I have washed the dishes instead of my mom.”

“So you broke the dishes like that? Originally, I shouldn’t even have given you your salary!”

“The dishes were really slippery.....”

California started to eat the pure with an expression as if it was really unfair. New York frowned as if he couldn’t hold it.

Kaya quietly left the table. She didn’t know why she felt good today. Regardless of being a day that she has to be nervous more than ever, she felt peace in her heart.

In the other side, Anderson couldn’t do so. But of course, it wasn’t that he was showing his lacking side. He led the kitchen more cool headedly than ever, and there were no flaws on the food. However, you couldn’t see leisure in his face at all. Perhaps, it would be more obvious in Anderson’s situation. It was a moment where his life would be decided. It was a place that even if you wanted to feel comfortable, you couldn’t.

Anderson gave several glances to the chefs even while leading on the kitchen. He didn’t miss even one moment of their expressions of chewing the food, and the sigh like thing that came out of their mouths. It could simply had been a lump in their throat, or a sigh with disappointment in it, but he couldn’t know..... One certain thing was that every time they did that, Anderson’s heart trembled.

‘Don’t think about the competition. Concentrate on serving the customers. Concentrate, Anderson.’

However, hope and anxiousness intersected in his head. His heart pounded so much he wondered if his desire for this competition was this big. When he thought about what he would do if he got eliminated, his breath got clogged as if he had already gotten eliminated.

Ironically, the one that calmed down Anderson was Kaya. Where did she leave her usual fierce and atrocious side of her, that at sometimes she even smiled gently like Chloe and served the chefs. He got nervous by looking at that side of her.

‘How damnable.’

But even if he was grumbling he that, he knew. That he had to imitate that damnable attitude. If they had to point out who was the inferior one, everyone would point at him.

Anderson bit his lips. He couldn’t fall back. It wasn’t only with Kaya, but he didn’t want to fall back to anyone. But it didn’t mean that he wanted to become the best. Because there was no best in the world of cooking. However, there were people that fell behind. He saw countless senior chefs in the restaurant of his parents getting chased out. And he wanted to evade ending up like that.

Anderson placed the roasted belly fat of a halibut and placed angel hair pasta, that was thin like thread, on top of it. Halibut flambeed with white wine and slightly smeared with lime juice. The deep aroma the belly that was next to the stomach had, and angel hair that was boiled with rosemary and slightly fried with olive oil.

The garnish was roasted peach, onions and fresh beads. Anderson placed the dishes on the table with a calm face. And started to explain it plainly.

“I smeared lime juice on the skin of the halibut, and I used the belly fat of it. For the angel hair, I boiled it along rosemaries and after that I fried it on olive oil. You will be able to feel a texture that’s like the first impression of Hong Kong.”

“So like Amelia’s son. Seeing how he plays internationally with even one dish. Just with eating this dish alone, I won’t even have to travel around the world.”

“If you only mention Amelia, Fabio will get disappointed. He just

resembles Fabio on the part that he doesn't regularly use brown sauce or white sauce, and he livens the flavor of vegetables and fruits. But why aren't your parents here? Ah. Is it because of fairness? Or because the owner isn't one, but two? Or California's throne was taken away by that Natalia?"

".....I'm not here as the son of Rousseau's family, but like Anderson. Let's talk about my parents after the competition ends."

"He's still as chilly as ever. See. He certainly resembles Amelia. No. If it was Amelia, he wouldn't end at that? Looking at that side he may resemble Fabio....."

Anderson forced himself to try to not to contort his face. However, on wherever table he went, the chefs shone their eyes and tried to find traces of Amelia and Fabio on him. It was tedious. He came here because the name of Anderson may get erased if he lived as their son, but now that he did come here, the shadow of his parents became larger and denser.

'.....I will certainly win.'

If he did so, it would change. He wouldn't simply be the son of a famous couple chef, but he would be able to stand as a chef himself. That was everything Anderson wanted. Grand Chef's prestige and the 300 thousand dollars were all secondary. Getting out of his parents shadow was the biggest homework he had hoped for all his life.

But he didn't know if that reason of his was as earnest as Kaya's. She lived all her life in poverty, and you wouldn't know if she was able to properly get a 'normal life' people casually talked about.

But even if that was the case, he also had a reason. And also had the skills. He didn't want to lose. Because he thought that he didn't get pushed back in skill. And it was also him that administered the people. Because there was that thing he had seen until now. He could believe in the skills of his comrades. Although there may be some differences, in the end they were all skilled people that got in

the top 10. And there wasn't even that much of a difference when Anderson compared to her. That was what he thought and believed.

Time flowed like that. 4 hours passed.

The mealtime ended.

—

Waiting room. Anderson loosened the neck tie of his uniform and down on the sofa as if he collapsed. An exhausted voice flowed from his throat.

“You have had it hard. Thanks.”

“You were the one that had it the hardest. Cheer up. You will be able to win.”

Anderson smiled faintly. Although he didn't know how the results would turn out, he felt a bit more relaxed. Could it be because he felt that he had poured everything?

Kaya rested her neck on the back of the sofa and stared at the ceiling. The lamp was emitting light like usual, but she didn't know why it felt like it was shining more than usual. She felt dizzy. Was it because she did many things in a short time? Chloe put a biscuit in Kaya's mouth. Kaya turned her head with an absent minded expression while still having the biscuit in her mouth.

“You look like you need some sugar. Eat for now.”

“Aieuuueoi.”

“Don't speak while having something in your mouth.”

Chloe snickered and pressed the biscuit. Kaya barely gulped it down and said.

“Ughhhhh.....”

But of course it was closer to a moan rather than words. Just how much strength did she lose that it seemed like she didn't even have

the strength to close her mouth again.

Kaya opened her mouth absent mindedly and did nothing. She really did nothing. Rolling her eyes, blinking, and she didn't even breathe. How many seconds could she have been like that? When Chloe counted about 30 seconds inwardly, Kaya roughly took in some breaths.

“.....Are you fine?”

“Not at all. But it's fortunate that today is the last day.”

“What are you going to do after the competition?”

“I wonder. First, I will pay the debt of my mom with the 300 thousand dollars..... And will I move to another house? But with 300 thousand dollars it would even be difficult to get a house with only one bedroom.”

“You can go to another state instead of New York. There's also Georgia.”

“I don't know. If my mother would want to leave New York. Although it was tedious, it's the place that we lived almost half of our lives.”

“So what?”

Anderson cutted her words. He looked at Kaya as if it was nonsense.

“Why are you talking like you have certainly won?”

“When did I?”

“The moment you started to talk about the 300 thousand dollars means that you will win.”

“I don't know. If after you win you say 'Ah, actually the genuine winner in this competition is Kaya Lotus. I will not only give the glory of this victory to Kaya Lotus, but also the prize to her.' “

“.....Rather, the future where Alan and Emily marries each

other will be more realistic.”

Kaya didn't reply back. It seemed like all her energy depleted with copying Anderson right before. Only after a long while did Kaya speak with a split voice, like someone that sang for quite a few hours.

“I didn't even cook but why am I this tired?”

“I'm also like that. It's normal.”

Anderson replied with an impertinent voice. Hugo opened his voice.

“I saw an interview a chef realized a while ago. People think that the role of head chef is easy because they don't grab the pan or knife and just have to check the dish. However leading the kitchen depletes your energy more than you think, and in your head you have to consider everything related to the kitchen. And that's why you can't feel comfortable..... Actually, when I became team leader, I felt the same way. So how will you feel if it's a day like today?”

“You two have done well. You were cool.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and said. It was the truth. Their looks of running towards their dreams shone. And he felt his heart getting warmer just with being able to stand together with them on the same place. But of course it wasn't that he didn't feel thirst. Because he was still half a step behind them. However, he believed that he would be able to catch up to them soon. No, he was determined to do so.

However there was no need to feel distressed. If he had a friend he could consider an objective, wasn't it a blessing? But in the case he wouldn't be able to catch up to them for all his life, interpreted in a good way, that would be a dream of chasing them for all their lives.

“I'm dying of curiousness as to what the chefs would be talking

about right now.”

“They would be praising me.”

“They will. But they will praise me even more.”

Even while exhausted, Anderson and Kaya glared at each other. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly. In the end, would there not be a gentle relationship between the two? Perhaps, he got a thought that they would live like Rachel and Serguei in mutual dislike for all their lives. It was then. A staff approached and yelled.

“The two finalists, go to the kitchen.”

“.....Yes.”

Anderson replied heavily and stood up. Kaya seemed to be more exhausted rather than being nervous of the results. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya.

“You will win.”

“.....I know.”

It was only for a moment, but Kaya’s voice sank heavily. However, that really was for only a moment, and the next instant Kaya was already up. And then started to walk. The moment the low beige shoes stepped on the next tile, Jo Minjoon unconsciously extended his leg on the crack in front of his leg.

However, as he extended his leg while sitting down, the tip of his leg just trembled at the end of the squared tile. If he didn’t get up, he wouldn’t be able to step on the tile. But now, it wasn’t the time for him nor Chloe to stand up. The only authorized ones to stand up now were Anderson and Kaya. Only they could move forward. But of course, one will end up walking even more than the other.....

‘I also have to get up.’

Jo Minjoon clenched his fists. His body felt tickly. At that moment, Chloe placed her hand above Jo Minjoon’s fist. Jo

Minjoon slowly turned his head. At that short instant he wondered about taking off his hand, but looking at the smile in Chloe's mouth, he couldn't do so.

The reason she wrapped his fist was solely because of consideration. It was because of the usual gentleness. Shaking off her hand was the same as shaking off her consideration and gentleness. You wouldn't know about other people, but he couldn't do so. He was a person he couldn't do so. Chloe opened her mouth.

“It's not the end.”

At those words, the unexpected stifling sensation melted down in an instant. Jo Minjoon smiled as if he couldn't cope with it. He loosened his fist. Chloe's took off her hand, and Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Right. It's only the start.”

Chapter 114: The Winner's Scale (3)

“It’s already been three times, but I still can’t get used to this moment.”

“It’s understandable, because there’s no moment that gets you more nervous on moments of fruition. And i’m talking about the cases where that fruition isn’t even ours.”

At Alan’s mumbling, Joseph quietly replied. The votes of the chefs ended. What remained now was only announcing it. One of the two will be given heaven, and to the other one only a deep and heavy despair will be given as it they only got close to that heaven.

‘It would be good if they overcame it well.’

Although the lighting was shining brightly, the black countertop and the black walls were too dark to get a bright impression. However rather than the white tables, the 50 chefs that also were wearing white uniforms made this moment kind of sacred and important.

The door opened. The door, which was so big made you wonder if an elephant was going to get in, opened and through that Kaya and Anderson were opening their eyes abruptly. Facing the 50 chefs at his back, Joseph opened his mouth.

“Kaya! Anderson! Before announcing the results, I will congratulate you for a moment. But it isn’t because you climbed all the way here. It’s because no one among these 50 chefs said the word ‘terrible’ with their mouths.”

“Adding to that, it isn’t because the temperaments of the chefs that came here is nice. Because from what I know quite a few nasty people, who are worse than stinky tofu, came.”

At Alan’s words, some chefs glared at him with fierce eyes. Alan smirked and said.

“Cameramen, if you are curious about who those stinky tofu’s

are, you can put the chefs that glared at me on the screen.”

“.....Well, whoever those stinky tofu are, the point is this. You have managed on satisfying chefs with high standards. There was also this word among the evaluations. ‘It was a menu that could have been served in my restaurant.’ If you know the attachment a chef has on their dish, you will know how difficult it is for them to say this.”

“So.”

Emily said with a voice mixed with happiness and impatience.

“Right at this moment, we feel light even when he have to eliminate one person. Because I believe that even if you get eliminated here, you didn’t do so on cooking.”

“Yes, I believe that you will become good chefs. And that you will run restaurants that won’t fall back at all compared to the ones the chefs that gathered here have.”

Kaya and Anderson just looked in front without saying anything. These two were ones that always clashed and fought, but ironically they were thinking the same thing right now. ‘I don’t want to lose at all.’ They say that you have to see things on the long run, but at least they wanted to step the furthest away.

Grand Chef’s victory. This was a shortcut which normal chefs could overcome in an instant. When they are getting recognized by chefs around the world, it would be completed in an instant using the power of the mass. But of course, it was up to themselves whether the instant made star chef could make any progress.

Most of all, the two of them had reasons. Why they couldn’t give away the victory of this competition. Just like Columbus discovered a new continent, and [Amundsen](#) fought and reached the South Pole, they also wanted the fruits of this competition. They wanted to fill their mouths with the juices that were sweeter than honey.

And they will say that it was sweet. That it was the most beautiful flavor they have tried in their lives.

However, there was only one person that could feel that flavor. The decision of the 52 chefs and 1 epicurean will make only one king or one queen. Kaya bit her lips. At that moment, she thought of her family. And her house. And the studio used by the three people. Memories about rummaging the clothes collection box while being aware of the sights of others and talking at school as if it was a new clothe they had bought.

And the powerless mother that could do nothing while looking at that daughter. She didn't want to live in that situation anymore. But of course, even if she couldn't win this competition, many things would change compared to her past life. Many restaurants would want her, and if she was lucky she would get a supporter. But..... She wanted to get away of this swamp the fastest possible. She didn't want that something was tying her legs.

Kaya clenched her pinky finger of her right hand. When she made the promise with Jo Minjoon, she had certainly received it. But she couldn't say what she received. But it was certain that she had received something, something that made her change. She didn't know why she felt that all of those things were filled in her pinky.

Joseph raised his voice.

“The winner received 34 votes from 54. It's not small, but a certain champion.”

“You can add to it many qualifiers. If we were to talk about what kind of dish it was and what kind of chef it was we would be able to make 30 minutes more worth of broadcast material. But we won't. It's because you have plenty of worth with just being you.”

Their sights were directed to her.

“Kaya. If perhaps you become the protagonist of that honor,

what will you do?”

“.....I will yell.”

“And after that?”

Kaya looked like she was thinking for a moment. And soon, she replied again with a determined face.

“I will yell even louder.”

Joseph smiled brightly.

“Then, do it. Yell. The winner of Grand Chef’s trophy of 2010 is you!”

After a while, the chefs and staff that were there all had to cover their ears.

—

The final ended, and at the same time, a party opened. Expressing it in Korean, would it be ‘wrap party’? At the same time it was also a place to congratulate Kaya’s victory.

Jo Minjoon wearing the tuxedo the directors gave him and he looked in the mirror. What was reflected in the mirror was himself, but what he was looking at was at the TV he saw at the waiting room. Inside the TV, the results were announced and Kaya’s image of shouting was still clear.

Why could it be? That certainly wasn’t his achievement. But even so, he felt that he had accomplished something. The one who made the step was Kaya, but he felt that he had also grown one level.

‘.....Is this indirect satisfaction?’

Jo Minjoon smirked and got out of the room. There was already a person in the hall, Anderson. A black suit as if he was going to a funeral. He was leaning on the wall while putting his hands on the pockets and staring absentmindedly at his shoes. Jo Minjoon walked in front of those shoes. Anderson slowly raised his head.

“.....Ah, you came?”

“You should be thinking about many things.”

“No. I’m rather not thinking about anything.”

At Anderson’s words, Jo Minjoon stood next to him and made the same posture. And said in a quiet voice.

“Kaya was still better.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“If it was the Kaya we saw first, it would have been difficult. Because she was a troublemaker. But she grew, and jumped over the elite chef Anderson.”

Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon with a weird face. Jo Minjoon spoke as if it was insignificant.

“We can also grow. On a marathon, if you see it until the end you won’t know who will goal in.”

“Wouldn’t Kaya have already made a goal?”

“Well, in that case we can also make a goal late. Ah, really. I don’t know why I keep saying these things when I am with you. I’m sorry if I just made you feel stifled.”

“.....I can’t feel more stifled than this. In the end, reality is simple. I lost. To that annoying scumbag Newyorker.”

“Why is Kaya a scumbag? She is just a bit rough.”

“People that act that roughly are normally called scumbag.”

He didn’t have anything to say. Thinking about it, there was no need to act like Kaya’s lawyer. Jo Minjoon separated from the wall.

“Are you planning to keep being sad here? You should at least go to the party. At least drink the alcohol you like over there.”

“.....Right. Let’s go.”

Most of the chefs that were invited as special judges still

remained in the party. Looking that everyone were wearing suits and dresses and laughing, you wondered if they were the same people that evaluated the dishes with a picky attitude. As soon as Jo Minjoon and Anderson got in, some chefs approached them.

“Anderson! Your food was really delicious. Although I voted for Kaya...”

“.....Then don't say that it's delicious.”

“No, it was. But it was less delicious compared to Kaya's. Precisely speaking, should I say that it was boring? You are really even. You really resemble Fabio on that point....”

“Please, can you stop saying that I resemble someone? And don't you have customers on Washington? Don't play leisurely over here and return to work.”

“Haha, why would I raise a disciple then? I raise one to leave it to him on cases like this.”

At the reply that came naturally, Anderson let out a sigh as if it was making him tired. He had certainly heard that it was a party to relieve the stress they had accumulated until now, but he didn't know why he felt that his head hurt more. The old man that was next to Washington glancing at Jo Minjoon coughed with an ‘ahem’ and said.

“I'm Brian Harper. I'm running ‘Big Table’ on New York. Are you that..... person who has that fucking sensitive of a tongue?”

Although it was a bit perplexing that Brian said those vulgar words calmly as if it was decent, Jo Minjoon didn't show it on his expression. Even if people recognized him or not, there was a common point on that chefs and artists created their works. Likewise, there were also many that had a bad temperament like artists. Jo Minjoon replied with a polite voice.

“Yes. I have a bit of talent on guessing the ingredients and the recipes.”

“I saw the broadcast. But you went to East Rabbit Garden when you were at New York, huh? It would have been better eating my food rather than that bastard Jeimy.”

“Ah, I also wanted to go to Big Table. But it was really difficult to make a reservation. They say that you had to do it half a year before?”

“If that was the reason, it’s understandable. Well, we have much more reservations than Jeimy’s restaurant because it’s more delicious and more popular!”

He didn’t know why but he didn’t see Brian, who was elevating his voice proudly with rough words, in a bad way. Because him getting proud of his restaurant felt just like a father being proud of his son or grandson. He understood him, and rather felt affectionate. Jo Minjoon smiled softly.

“I will certainly go there.”

“Are you planning on stealing my recipe?”

“I will learn quite a lot.”

At Jo Minjoon’s natural reply, Braian sharpened his eyes but soon, his corner of the mouth contorted like a devil.

“Good. I’m also curious as to whether you will be able to steal my recipe or not. If you come to New York some day, contact me. If we don’t have a seat, I will even pull out a bench of the streets and make you a seat.”

“It would be my honor then.”

“Haha, maybe because you came from Asia, a young man like you really is quite well mannered. Natalia, Natalia! Come here and learn a bit. He isn’t even my disciple but he is this polite.”

“Ah, that friend still wouldn’t have been hit with a ladle by teacher! Even so, I’m the one who treats you the best?”

“When did I, with a ladle.....”

Brian replied with a loud voice, but he slowly started to lower that voice. Thinking about it, he felt that it had happened some day. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was trying not to laugh and turned his sight. His eyes shook as if he was perplexed for a moment. He saw a dress. And it wasn't an ordinary one. No, precisely speaking the dress itself was normal. However, the people that wore the dresses made it not look normal.

They were Kaya and Chloe. Although next to them there was also Joanne and Ivanna, the ones that got into his eyes were only those two. And it wasn't simply because they were close. And it also wasn't because just by wearing a dress they became beautiful like angels.

Their atmosphere became really different. Kaya looked like Chloe, and Chloe looked like Kaya. First, the clothes itself was like that. Chloe wore a black dress that showed one of her shoulders, had dense eye makeup like Kaya and spread her hair. She wore fake rubies for earrings and necklace, and on that luxuriousness it was really difficult to find the usual ordinary countryside lady on her.

On the other side, Kaya wore a bright beige one piece dress which the chest part was digged, and she didn't even wear make up. It wasn't that she dressed up ordinarily but, her usual rough feeling was certainly less. Jo Minjoon smirked and asked.

“Did you change concepts?”

“Kaya is the champion. Originally, champions have to look noble instead of rough. And the competitors are the ones who have to look rougher.”

Chloe smirked and said. Kaya adjusted the chest part of the dress as if it was embarrassing and asked with an uneasy voice.

“Is it weird?”

“No, it's only unfamiliar but it's pretty. I like it.”

Jo Minjoon hurriedly replied. As he remembered, this was the first time Kaya dressed up this smoothly. And even if he summed up the memories from returning back was like that. But of course, if he took into account what wasn't uploaded to the internet, this would be the first time he looked at her like this. Kaya said with an embarrassed voice.

“This is too erotic. Just why did the director bastards give this to Chloe?”

“Ah, you two swapped dresses?”

“That fits me too much.”

Kaya pointed Chloe's dress. Jo Minjoon slowly thought. ‘It doesn't seem like it fits Chloe that much.’ Chloe blushed.

“It's because I exercise. If you exercise, you lose weight.”

“Uh.....Yeah.”

“Why are you looking me like that? Please don't put that sorry expression. Compared to Kaya, I'm just a bit small.....No, I'm just slim. But even so, I'm just average. It's true.”

Chloe put a teary face.

“Don't look away!”

Chapter 115: The Winner's Scale (4)

The time which the four of them could concentrate on their conversation was not that long. Even before the sadness on Chloe's face could disappear, the chefs flocked over. The interest they showed was bigger than expected, and the result of that was that just exchanging names with one person made the time pass quickly.

And Jo Minjoon also got many questions. Most of them were related to the sense of taste he had. As he couldn't tell them about the system, he just ambiguously smiled, but it seemed that it was seen as humbleness because their eyes looking at him had become softer.

‘Well, it's not a bad misunderstanding.’

Looking at the attitudes of the chefs he could confirm that the aftereffects created by the absolute sense of taste wasn't small at all. They were all curious about him, and there were even some that gave him their business card telling him to go to their restaurants. Of course, they made a similar proposition to the other participants too, but at least Jo Minjoon was overwhelmed with invitations to restaurants. Even compared to Kaya that had won, there were more people inviting him.

Well, if you were a chef, you could obviously not be uninterested about that absolute sense of taste. That it hadn't appeared on history even once also meant that there also weren't chefs that had served a customer with an absolute sense of taste. There were few chefs that didn't lend their hands in front of that special experience that may not happen ever again.

It was to the point that a chef that ran a restaurant with a peculiar recipe as the main item invited Jo Minjoon.

“It's fine if you steal the recipe. Instead, I would like you to pay the food fees and recipe fee with your emotions.”

Actually, aside of actually feeling the flavor or not, he couldn't guess what kind of high standard expression they wanted. Only after a while did he excuse himself and as he went to a corner, he saw Marco eating a crepe that had banana, chocolate, and peanut butter in it. He gulped down the crepe in his mouth.

“If you want to eat go over there to the second table. There are quite a lot.”

“.....No. It's not that I want to eat.”

“You want to sit?”

Jo Minjoon sat down with a thud instead of replying. Jo Minjoon was silent for a moment and then silently said.

“It's over.”

“Actually, it was over for us a while ago.”

“.....Even so, I get the feeling that it ended for real now.”

“Mmm.....I think that I barely know what you are talking about.”

Marco nodded and this time he started to drink a drink mixed with cocoa and banana. Jo Minjoon said with a tired expression.

“It seems like you got bigger than before.”

“Yeah..... Maybe it's because of the accumulated stress. I started to eat a bit more.”

“Stress, why? You already got a place to work, isn't now where you can take a breath?”

“That's not true. When you solve a problem, another tends to appear.”

“That's right.”

Life is followed by small or big problems continuously. Jo Minjoon said with a worried voice.

“Even so, don't relieve it by eating. The colour of your face

doesn't look good. Did you go to a hospital recently?"

".....Mm, after I start to work I will have to get examined."

"Let's see each other for long. Healthily."

At Jo Minjoon's words, Marco laughed shyly and nodded.

"Thanks. For worrying about me."

"We are friends."

"Mm. Right."

Just as they said some ashaming things, they couldn't look at each other for a while as if it was embarrassing. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. A graceful dress with a composed makeup. They say that clothes are wings, when she raised a corner of her mouth like usual, rather than a playful feeling it felt more like a provocative feeling.

One corner of his heart felt warm and yet a bit disappointed. He should be happy about Kaya's victory, but honestly speaking he couldn't be happy when distance appeared on their relationship. Jo Minjoon inspected his stats. Absolute sense of taste, system, and the talent he originally had. Combining all of that, until where would he be able to climb? Will he be able to step on the same worldly rank as Kaya?

'.....It's not a problem about probabilities.'

In the end, trying or not was the most important problem, and Jo Minjoon was ready to do so. As his face changed with a look of firm resolve, Emily approached and sat next to Jo Minjoon. She started to talk with a slightly blushed face as if she was a bit drunk.

As his face changed with a look of firm resolve, Emily approached and sat next to Jo Minjoon.

"Minjoon, we are soon travelling?"

"Yeah."

“I’m telling you again, but you did well on accepting. Minjoon. It will certainly be a good time.”

“.....Travel?”

Marco said with a perplexed voice. He seemed to be talking about something and soon said with an astonished voice.

Just as it was shocking, his voice was also big. So much that the country music and the laughter of the people got buried in it. In an instant, Jo Minjoon and Emily looked at the sights being directed at them and looked at each other.

“.....Haa.”

Even before the sigh dissipated, the storm came.

—

“I’m sorry.”

Marco said with a dispirited face. Because of Marco’s sudden misunderstanding, Jo Minjoon and Emily could get exposed on everyone’s questions and congratulations. They did make some explanations, but there were some that were certain that the two of them were dating. Kaya slightly glanced and asked.

“But.....It’s not true, right?”

“.....How can you also ask me that?”

“No, but, that’s. Mmm.....Nothing.”

Kaya seemed to say something but shut her mouth in the end. Chloe rolled her hair with her finger and said.

“How good. You will even travel.”

“The problem is where we go. If we go somewhere like Africa I will die because of the heat.”

“Even so the heat you feel when you travel is an enjoying heat.”

“.....You have never lived on a hot place, right?”

Chloe smiled merrily instead of replying.

The party had ended. More accurately, they had escaped. Because there were still some that were enjoying the alcohol and conversing. But they were on the lobby of the 4th floor like usual. They needed time for themselves for the last time. But of course, they may meet some other time, but this place and this moment had a meaning on its own while being with them.

The group didn't include all of the participants, but rather only five: Marco, Anderson, Chloe, Jo Minjoon, and Kaya. The rest were still at the party.

For a moment everyone kept silent. They could feel the silence and the calm breath. The parting time that would soon come casted a shadow on their eyes. The one that threw a rock on the still water was Kaya.

“Will we be able to gather here again?”

“I don't know if we can do it here, but we will be able to gather. It's not a place that we can come as we please. Instead will it be that difficult to gather again? Although it's difficult for everyone to be together.....Won't it be easy for three or four people to gather?”

“If you have the heart, what will be the problem?”

In the end the problem was how much this moment's emotions lasted. They wanted to think that it wouldn't end that way, but where in the world was a heart that didn't cool off?

Chloe looked at Kaya with teary eyes.

“Kaya, it's not that you won't play with us anymore just because you got famous, right?”

“She may do so.”

Anderson said with a blunt voice. Kaya glared at Anderson for a moment and shook her head.

“Of course I will play with you. Where would I find people like you to play around? And even if I get some, you are the best. It was the first relationship that the ending wasn’t bad.Well, although we didn’t see the end. Even so.....”

Kaya’s voice split. Between the split voice, moist seeped in. Kaya shut her mouth and moved her mouth seeming to want to say something, but in the end she lowered her head. Kaya’s long and slender fingers covered her mouth. And again, covered her eyes.

Below her trembling fingers, her red nose started to sniff. Between the lips that were brighter than her nose, her two front teeth appeared, and soon, all of her teeth could be seen. No, her emotions could be clearly seen.

“.....I have always looked for someone to love me.”

Kaya barely said one sentence with a trembling voice and soon took in some breath while trembling. And exhaled it again.

Her hands covering her eyes got off. Her eyebrows were down and her forehead was narrowed. The shadow that appeared on her eyes seemed just like her smoky makeup. Kaya subbed, talked, and confessed.

“You rescued me. Aside of winning this competition, I felt happy for having received love from someone besides my family. And..... I was sc-scared.”

“.....What were you scared of?”

Jo Minjoon asked with a low voice. Although other people didn’t know, Chloe could. It didn’t show off on Kaya, but Jo Minjoon’s voice was also a bit wet.

Kaya looked at the ground and moved her sight. The frail girl that didn’t have anyone to depend on, and the sorrow of that frail person remained as a scar trembling on his eyes. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya with a similar eye.

“For being alone again. No, If I perfectly assented that I am a

person that can only be alone. Thanks for not making me like that. Even if I got famous, what case would there be if I were alone? You gave me hope. That was really.....”

Her cry gulped down her words. Chloe embraced Kaya without words. Marco raised handkerchief from the side and wiped off her tears, and Anderson was just sitting still without saying anything.

Jo Minjoon couldn't say anything. It felt like his heart was swelling like a balloon. Even calming his heart down was difficult. In the end, it was a good confession. Although most of what she said was about her scar, in the end it meant that she had healed that scar. But just by looking at the mark of that scar, no, just with listening to things related to that scar made him want to yell and he felt like he wanted to take out the thing that was hanging on his heart.

Even so the protagonist of this conversation was Kaya. If he was looking at Kaya's overcoming look, what he had to do was to cheer. But why could it be? At this moment what he wanted to do wasn't the kind of cheering, but he wanted to permeate Kaya's feelings. He wanted to cry together and embrace her just like Chloe. But that wasn't his role. In the first place, they didn't have a relationship to think about that.

‘I.....How am I looking at Kaya?’

The doubtful rock has been thrown on the spring. The surface made a ripple, and the rock didn't come up again. Jo Minjoon just looked at that spring. However the spring was deep, and he couldn't even see what was being reflected on it.

“Minjoon.”

Kaya called him. Jo Minjoon got surprised and raised his head. She wiped off the snot with the back of her hand and smiled as if she was crying.

“Thank you. I could believe because you also believed in me.

From now on.....Also believe in me. Just like I am with you.”

“Saying that you believe in me..... It can only continue if it’s not a lie. If it was a trust that changed according to the time or situation, in the first place it would have been a fake one. I..... don’t do fake ones.”

“I know. You are real, more real than the truth of the earth spinning.”

Even while they were exchanging dense words, the others couldn’t say anything because it was an atmosphere that they shouldn’t do that. Jo Minjoon felt his face heating up for nothing and evaded Kaya’s eyes.

The winner was Kaya, in the future and right now. And among the weight that got up on her scale, there was a weight added that wouldn’t disappear whatever happened. It was the most valuable weight.

The name of that weight.....

Chapter 116: Hunger Trip (1)

Sara Bloom : Ah, I knew that it will end someday, but when it really ended it feels really null.

└ JIF VS GIF : When will the next season come?

└ Sara Bloom : @JIF VS GIF For now it's certain that it won't come this year.

Roy Sherfan : I feel good about my wife winning, but I feel bad about weird guys flocking.

└ Randle Klopers : For me you are one of those weird guys.

SKELIX : So what's the conclusion? The ending to make Kaya big was just 'She became an excellent chef?'

└ Denizz Onenn : What other ending did you expect from a cooking program?

└ Tricia Peanut : @Denizz Onenn It seems like he had hoped for an explosive kiss scene.

Rachel Catherine : It's vague being a continuing program, but the broadcast that would get out after Grand Chef would be about a 'tasting travelling program'. What was the title? Hunger Trip? I think that was it.

└ Beth Liebermann : Adding to that, they say that it's true that Emily Potter and Jo Minjoon will participate in it.

└ Rachel Catherine: @Beth Liebermann Oh, really? I didn't really see that they suited each other.

└ Beth Liebermann: @Rachel Catherine Aside of suiting each other and not, first their characters are certain. A genius with an absolute sense of taste, and a talented heiress. It would be good if other famous chefs also participate..... Anyways, they will be busy with their restaurants, right?

“.....It seems like they also are quite interested on the hunger

trip.”

Jo Minjoon said with an amazed voice while reading the mentions. Hunger Trip. It was the title of the tasting travelling program he would be doing with Emily. But of course he wouldn't be doing it alone with Emily, but there would be other participants added.

‘Perhaps, they would have already been added.’

Martin avoided replying about things related to the participants. He couldn't know the reason, but even if he did nothing would change. Because whoever came they would be people he didn't know about.

“How envioussss. I also want to go.”

Chloe's voice was so low just like her lying face down on the sofa. Her arms that were on the air were directed to the chocolates on the table, but her arms were too short to reach it. Jo Minjoon extended his arm and put one chocolate on Chloe's hand. Chloe checked the chocolate he gave her and pouted.

“.....You hate me, right?”

“What are you saying so suddenly?”

“Is there someone that doesn't hate you but gives you a cocktail flavored chocolate?”

“I could have given you to lose appetite and get slimmer.”

A playful smile appeared on Jo Minjoon's face. Chloe raised her body from the sofa and after she put down the cocktail chocolate she grabbed a milk chocolate. Then said while assuming a prim air.

“Leave it. I'm going to become a pig.”

“Then you also won't be able to put on that dress because it fits tightly.”

“What? It's the last day but you will act like this?”

Chloe glared at Jo Minjoon with a sulky face and then hesitated and put down the chocolate. The competition and the party ended. Now, what remained was returning. Chloe kept having these thoughts. Will we really be able to see each other? The worlds we live in is so different, but will we be able to cross paths?

Her anxiousness melted down again on her smile. Jo Minjoon looked at the snacks on the table and said.

“What will you do when you return?”

“I have to think about it. For now, the certain thing is that I will run a cooking blog. And.....Actually some proposals came to me too. Broadcasts. But of course, it's not a genuine broadcast like Hunger Trip which you are going to, It's like a few minutes recipe show.....”

“What? Why didn't you say it until now?”

“.....It's too pathetic to be proud of.”

Chloe said with an embarrassed face.

“Kaya won, and you participate on a continued broadcast.....I wonder what am I. I'm sorry. You don't like girls who stink inwardly, right?”

“If you stink with only that I won't be able to open my mouth because of the rotten smell.”

“As you speak like that, do I have to say thank you?”

She clenched her fists.

“I will also succeed. The path I chose now, I will walk until I can. And my dream.....”

Her fists fell. A vivid smile appeared on her face, and her eyes that shone in green and in brown directed to Jo Minjoon.

“I will make it.”

Her face flushing could have been because of the embarrassment

or it could simply be her makeup. The wrinkles that appeared between her cheeks when she smiled was quite charming. Jo Minjoon couldn't reply anything. When he was just smacking his lips, a saviour appeared. It was Hugo. He came out pulling a carrier and massaged his neck.

“Ugh, how stiff. I brought a lot of luggage for nothing. Did you take everything?”

“Yeah. We got everything.”

“Ah, there's chocolate. Give me one of that.”

Jo Minjoon gave him the chocolate he gave to Chloe before. Hugo chewed with expectant eyes and soon frowned. At first he could feel the flavor of chocolate, but next to that the creamy alcohol melted down in his mouth as if it exploded. He said with a trembling voice as if he didn't understand what he had eaten.

“Wha, what is this? Is this chocolate?”

“Yeah. Cocktail chocolate.”

“Just what..... Did they take all the nondelicious things and put it in it? Really, why did you give this to me? Did I do something wrong?”

At Hugo's reaction, Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon with shining eyes. You could clearly feel that she was thinking ‘Look look. Right? I was right, huh?’ Jo Minjoon burst out of laughter. Hugo gulped down the chocolate in his mouth with a displeased face.

“.....If I just had a bin near I would have certainly spit it.”

“There's a saying in my country that medicines that are good for your body are bitter.”

“If that's right everything bitter would turn out good for your body.”

“You don't know. If it will be good.”

Jo Minjoon smirked. Hugo sat down on the sofa with a thud and

a face as if he had eaten a powder medicine. After that, as soon as Kaya came out, he raised the chocolate with shining eyes as if this was the chance.

“Kaya. Do you want to eat chocolate?”

“No. I don’t want to.”

“.....Why?”

“I brushed my teeth.”

Hugo put down the chocolate with a depressed face. Kaya glanced slightly at the lobby and sat on the arm of the sofa that Jo Minjoon was seated. She lapped her slightly curved black hair and smiled.

“Isn’t my hair good nowadays?”

“I prefer your hair of before.”

Chloe said as if it was sad. Taking into account that she preferred disheveled hair, it was understandable. Because the hair of Kaya right now was as smooth as a shampoo model.

“Are you using some conditioner?”

“Before, I didn’t use it because it was bothersome and expensive, but nowadays I can.”

“Now that you earned \$300,000, that much should be nothing.”

“That’s what I mean.”

Kaya broadened her chest in a dignified way and smirked. Honestly speaking, \$300,000 wasn’t that big of a money to change the life of someone but at least it had plenty of meaning for Kaya. Because it helped her leave her past market life. In the first place, she lived a life where she couldn’t even spend 30 dollars leisurely. For her, she could only feel proud and praiseworthy for having earned that big of a money.

Outside the window of the car, Anderson was looking at the half-sun-tanned window with his usual blunt face. As the scenery got

farther, Anderson, too, got farther. Grand Chef's house also got farther. Compared to before, this was really farewell without promises.

Kaya stuck her face to the window and looked at the building and the garden until the end. But when she couldn't even see the shadow of it, Kaya said with a stifled expression.

"Even so, as we are going together it's a bit more comfortable. I think that I would have been quite depressed if I left alone."

"Depressed.....Well, yeah."

Chloe looked on her memories and nodded. The day when she left on the quarter finals as the eliminated one, she was certainly depressed because quite many things had happened.

"Next time.....When will we be able to meet?"

Nobody could reply to that question and nobody refuted it. That Kaya was speaking as if she would obviously meet with them again.

—

"Is it regretful because you couldn't leave with them?"

Martin approached and asked towards Anderson that was standing for quite a while even after the bus had disappeared from the horizon. Anderson slowly turned his head. He said with a voice full of displeasure even when he saw it.

"Just what is it? Why did you tell only me to remain?"

"Mm, I'm sorry for having lessened the time to be with your friends. But I don't think that this should be talked here.....Should we move places?"

".....Let's go to the lobby of the 4th floor."

"Oh my, climbing stairs isn't my hobby."

Martin put on a teary face, but Anderson didn't change his words. In the end he could only climb the stairs to the 4th floor.

Martin sat on the sofa while taking some breaths.

Anderson just looked at the table while sitting on his place. Looking at the opened chocolates, candies, etc. he would have gotten annoyed. But he didn't know why felt as joyful as he missed his friends. Looking at Anderson tying the plastic bags again to take the shape of candies, Martin opened his mouth.

“Why do you think I only told you to remain?”

“It would be a business proposal. And if it's that there would be two reasons. Looking that you only called me and not the others, it would be related to my parents.....Or you need something from me. Maybe.”

Anderson asked with a calm voice.

“Tasting travel..... So is it related to that Hunger Trip?”

“... ..”

Martin looked at Anderson absentmindedly as if he had taken a blow. He didn't know that his intentions would get exposed this easily. ‘I wanted to surprise him the most.’ Martin said with a disappointed voice.

“You catch on really fast. Then, are you also expecting what kind of proposal I will make you?”

“There would also be two things. First, ask my parents to let you broadcast on their restaurant. But this isn't something I can promise you. First, you would know if you saw my parents, but my words don't have much strength. And if maybe, it's about me participating in it.....”

Anderson's eyes sharpened.

“Do you want me?”

“.....Yes. Actually that's the case.”

Even while thinking ‘It kinda feels like i'm getting discouraged.’ Martin could only reply honestly. Martin calmly continued saying.

“Originally I was planning to only take professional people, but as we took into account Jo Minjoon’s participation, the direction changed a bit. Altogether, what difference would there be on a professional and on a nonprofessional when tasting the same food? We also considered that point. And of course, the people will be able to immerse more on the point of view of a nonprofessional person.”

“But why me? In the case of Chloe, she also looks like a star, and it would be better to raise the rating. Kaya well....As she won, she wouldn’t have the time.”

“Actually we also considered Chloe. However when I was about to make the proposal, I learned that she got appointed to another broadcast. And even if that wasn’t the case, the probabilities of us taking in Chloe would have been low. Although she suits well with Jo Minjoon, the viewers prefer clashes rather than soft atmospheres. Just like you and Kaya. And we judged that if you appeared along with Jo Minjoon, you would be able to get the balance for that soft and rough atmosphere.”

Anderson slowly played with the candies. He rolled it, and then unrolled it. After that he said.

“In the end it means that I should be Minjoon’s groomsman, right? I think that I already experienced plenty of it with being Kaya’s groomsman. It’s not that charming of a proposal for me. It would be helpful on Minjoon on letting him experience worldwide cultures..... But I have already experienced plenty of it.”

“The advantages aren’t simply on the tasting experience. The broadcast fees are quite famous as you can see, and most of all it will be able to raise your reputation. A reputation that’s hard to acquire even after many years behind the kitchen’s walls.”

The reply didn’t come for a long while. Anderson shut his eyes and organized his thoughts, and after that he said in a low voice.

“I’m sorry. I don’t think it’s related to me. Honestly speaking, I

think that the little bit of reputation I have right now is enough, and the broadcasting fees..... As I know, I'm not a son that's longing for money."

"One thing."

Martin opened his mouth. He said with an expression of a general that took out his final weapon.

"There's one more thing that will make you feel it's charm."

".....What's that?"

At Anderson's question, Martin searched on the documents he had on his chest instead of replying. He took out one picture among those documents. Anderson, who was looking at it with casual eyes, got shocked to the point his eyes got larger. He said with a surprised voice.

"Perhaps....."

"Yes. It's just that perhaps."

Martin smiled confidently.

"Have you changed minds now?"

Chapter 117: Hunger Trip (2)

The passion of the absolute sense of taste, Jo Minjoon.

Most people tend to at least have one dream. But no one can challenge that dream while also throwing away what they have. Because of that, all the while when I was about to go and meet the youth, my heart was flustered. How many people would there be that come to the US for a competition just with the passion for cooking?

Although he couldn't attain victory, he gained popularity that chefs in Korea can't get after ten or twenty years of effort. Although you wouldn't know about Korean people, whose characteristics are that they aren't interested on cooking programs, at least among Korean cooks, he would be the most famous one. Just when searching for his name on a site there are hundreds of thousands of articles related to him, so arguing anymore about his fame would be meaningless.

Some may think that for someone that doesn't even have experience to get famous would be unrealistic. However I don't agree to that thought. Jo Minjoon has plenty of qualifications to show off that popularity. The first one is traveling all the way to the US just by believing on his passion, the second is the absolute sense of taste no one in the world can have.

To interview him we came all the way here driving on the car and we almost crash on streetlights because I was drunk on expectation and a flustered heart. And after that danger, Jo Minjoon faced us with the vivid and soft smile we saw on the broadcast.

You got a better start than most chefs that are in Korea, how do you feel about it?

"Cooking is like that. Even if you cook it well, season it well, and also do the plating well, if you twist your feet in the middle of

going to the customer it all disappears. I still haven't finished the cooking process of that. And that's why this moment feels more cautious. If I had ruined it, I would be more open headed. But at least the first step was good."

What's the reason you weren't conscious of your absolute sense of taste?

"Mmm..... Actually, it's a bit difficult to reply that this actually is an absolute sense of taste. I can only feel the ingredients well. Scoring it, well, I'm just talking about the cooking state."

Even so, the scene you guessed 20 ingredients consecutively, even I got goosebumps by that. Actually, it's something impossible for anyone in the world. Most of all you even guessed what meat it is, no, what part it is.

(At these words, he just replied with a smile.)

– I heard that you were planning on dropping of college, won't you regret it later?

– "I won't. If in case, I expend time in a path that wasn't for me, I would regret that more. Life is short, and the twenties doesn't come back two times. As it's the most important time, I want to spend it on what I love the most."

– I thought of this when you said that it's the thing you love the most.....But while Grand Chef was running, there's someone you got related to that love.

"Ah....." (He put an expression as if what had to come had come.)

Can I ask you what's the actual relationship with Kaya Lotus?"

"Actually even I thought of that when I looked at the edited parts. That it looked like a drama. But the certain thing is that our relationship isn't that of a couple, but of friends."

Actually, even when you see it after removing the romantic parts, I get the feeling that you resemble each other a lot. On the side of

cooking. Miss Kaya tends to cook international food, and you are also like that. What do you think about that part?

“Saying the truth, I also thought a lot about that. In the case of Kaya, she can express every country as if it’s hers. But I can’t do as well as Kaya. It isn’t that Kaya studied all of those dishes, but she got accustomed to it because she experienced on her life.”

And?

“Actually, when I looked at people that call themselves masters, they investigate and improve one dish in tens of years. And I’m talking about things like Seolleongtang([설렁탕](#)), Kalguksu([칼국수](#)), Kongnamul kukbap([콩나물국밥](#)), Sushi([초밥](#)). Honestly speaking even if I do have some skills, will I be able to surpass the Seolleongtang and, Kalguksus those people make?”

It will be difficult.

I don’t think that it’s difficult, but it’s impossible. No, even while thinking of their enthusiasm and effort, that can’t be possible. That’s why once, I wondered a lot. That as I make many things, the depth of it wouldn’t turn thin.”

Taking into account you said ‘once’ does it mean that you got over it?

Rather that getting over it, I think that I found the answer. In the end, the specialties are different for everyone. Being bound by boundaries or not, if you mix red and blue at first you will simply get a messy blue and red, but if you keep mixing it purple will come out. Then, you can take in this and that colour.”

Having this conversation, I couldn’t help but be amazed. Actually, the biggest reason I got to meet him was because of his international popularity and his absolute sense of taste, but after meeting him it simply became to the point that I want to know more about his cooking world.

For normal chefs, precisely speaking young chefs, it’s difficult to

even have a philosophy on cooking if they weren't geniuses. But could it be because of the special situation? He had to wonder about a lot of things until now, and the result of that was that he had created his own cooking philosophy. Just like the worries of a chef deepens, it would be obvious for that flavor to also deepen.

.....(ellipsis).....

Soon, Jo Minjoon will participate on the continuation program of Grand Chef called 'Hunger Trip', that's about a tasting travelling. People that got access to this will focus on the point that a Korean would participate on an American broadcast, but I want to focus on another place.

If this young and talented cook experiences various foreign cultures, so if he makes it his own, just how wonderful of an experience will the dishes he cook be? Jo Minjoon said that his final objective was to make food that made people happy. I think that his dream will probably be realized. Because just by imagining about his cooking, I already got half happy.

—

Song Mingi : Jo Minjoon you are cool.

Ahn YaeSeul : Certainly my man.

└ NopeMan : Nope.

└ Ahn YaeSeul : @NopeMan ——

Yakult : That Hunger Trip won't be available nationally, right?

└ DumbNDumber : I heard that it won't. I don't know about cooking competitions, but if that's broadcasted in Korea it will have quite many viewers.....

└ Yakult : @DumbNDumber There are similar broadcasts nationally. But I think that's the reason why it's not popular. There will be few people that look for foreign dubbings or subtitles.

Lee JungSeok : Just look how incompetent that reporter is. She can only do that much? You should at least ask him when they will marry.

MJ : I actually saw Jo Minjoon, but he's more fine than on the screen.

└ NopeMan : Nope.

Jo Minjoon read all of the comments. His popularity in Korea could be said that it is 'Ah, I did hear about that. He has absolute sense of taste?' There weren't many people that recognized him on the streets, and when some did recognize him it wasn't to the point to ask him for an autograph. Although very few people did ask him to take a picture with them.....

And on this place, you couldn't feel their interest at all. Brazil. Jo Minjoon hanged a piece of paper that had Emily Potter written on it and stood on the entrance. Jo Minjoon said to his appointed cameraman.

"Emily's late. The plane should already have arrived an hour ago. Is there something on the examination that takes long?"

It was obvious but the cameraman didn't reply. He couldn't make his voice go to the broadcast.

Although he heard that there were many participants, he had to be alone with Emily on today's broadcast. Could it be a feeling like looking for your comrades? Martin said that the others would slowly appear. Honestly speaking, he didn't care what happened with the others. What bothered him the most was what kind of food would he eat.

'Will I eat meat first?'

He thought of roasted skewers. [Churrasco](#). It was a traditional Brazilian food that you put meat, vegetables, etc. on the skewer and ate it. There would be many other dishes aside of that, but Jo Minjoon had only eaten that Brazilian food.

A woman with blonde hair came out of the gate and was looking around. She wore short jeans that stuck to her body, a white shirt with Picasso's self portrait and a cardigan that had gray and blue mixed in it. It seemed like she tried not to look extravagant, but the feeling overflowed. Even if she half covered her face with a sunglass, you could know that she was Emily Potter.

“Emily!”

Jo Minjoon raised his voice. Emily turned her head and soon, smiled brightly and approached him.

“Ah, sorry. I was late, right?”

“Did something happen on the examination?”

“It wasn't me, but a person that was in front of me seemed to try to come in with drugs, but he got caught.”

“.....How scary is Brazil.”

“Isn't the US like that too? It's almost the same.”

Emily talked like that and took off her sunglass. She frowned because of the sunlight and then opened her mouth.

“Martin, where are we going now?”

“Before telling you where we are going, we will tell you the basic rules.”

“Rules?”

At Emily's confused expression, Martin laughed ill naturedly.

“You have to have three meals per day. It doesn't matter whether you buy it or do it yourselves. Only, you have to eat something that can be called a meal.”

“What if we don't?”

“You will be given a penalty. For example sleeping outdoors, reduction of activity fees.”

“.....Fine. Is there something else we have to know?”

“As it’s the first day, let’s pull a simple joke.”

“Joke?”

“You will soon know about it.”

Emily and Jo Minjoon looked at each other without saying anything. Their own faces became a mirror. The nervous mirror. The two thought simultaneously. ‘It’s not the romantic atmosphere I thought it would be.....’ Martin checked the time and said.

“It’s 10 in the morning. As today is the first broadcast, I will give you one privilege.”

“.....What privilege?”

Martin smirked.

“You can only eat lunch and dinner. We will overlook breakfast.”

“.....Yes?”

They couldn’t understand just why was that a privilege. Emily’s face became anxious and then opened her mouth.

“How much will you give us for the food?”

“Even I don’t know about that. You will have to decide.”

“We can choose how much we get?”

“A choice is a choice.”

Martin lent a can. It was a can that had long wooden sticks in it. And then said with a wicked voice.

“Here, pick one.”

Chapter 118: Hunger Trip (3)

‘.....Even if it’s a limitation for the first day.’

Jo Minjoon looked at the wooden sticks in front of him while looking frustrated. Could they have inquired about Korean entertainment shows? He couldn’t know. In the first place he didn’t even know how American entertainment shows proceeded. Emily asked with sharp eyes.

“Wait. What’s the highest and lowest value?”

“The highest is 300 reals, and the lowest is 50 reals. Also, you won’t have any problems on solving your meals. Only, it will be difficult to get expensive and abundant food.”

(PR Note: To give an idea, a Big Mac costs around R\$15.32, according to latest survey here.)

Even so, it was fortunate that the highest was a big amount. Jo Minjoon didn’t hesitate and pulled a stick and let out a sigh. Martin asked with a face full of expectation.

“How much is it?”

“I’m damned.”

Jo Minjoon showed his stick. Martin’s face, which was smiling merrily, immediately turned dark the moment he saw the stick. He twisted his mouth as if the sigh Jo Minjoon had let out was fake.

“It’s 300 reals.”

“.....Let’s proceed. Emily. Pick one!”

“Wait.”

Emily pointed the stick Martin had in his hand.

“Why don’t you put it back?”

“It’s already been picked.”

“Then it means that I have to pick something below 300 reals?”

“Yes.”

“Martin! Even if it’s entertainment, this is too much. The moment people feel the worse is when they can’t eat what they want.... Are you planning on making me feel bad?”

Emily said with a sulky voice. Martin showed a soft smile and admonished her as if he would to a kid.

“Emily. As I told you before, 50 dollars is still big money. It’s almost 30 dollars. If it’s ordinary food, you will have enough even after two meals. Also, it’s really cheap in Brazil.”

“Even so, pulling straws was too much. I don’t even expect 300 reals. 100 reals..... No, 200 reals. Just give me 200 reals.”

“Emily. You know that when you are hungry the food is the most delicious.”

“.....I understand. I will pull one.”

Emily extended her hand to the wooden sticks with a face as if she had surrendered. Her trembling hand was showing how nervous she was. Her hand that was pondering grabbed one stick. And when she pulled it, she said with a voice as if she would cry.

“I knew this would happen.”

There was a 50 written on the stick.

—

Everytime they took a step, sand got in their shoes. Emily and Minjoon were at São Paulo, at a beach you didn’t know the name of. It was July, which was still winter in Brazil. But the weather, rather than being cold, was fresh

But even so, there were quite few people sunbathing on the beach. Some were running on the sidewalk next to the sand boxes as if they were jogging, and every time the waves clashed, the kids fell down and yelled. When they looked at the blue sea, their head cooled down as if ice exploded in front of their eyes, and looking at

the round parasols they felt that they got inside a movie.

But it seemed like Emily couldn't sense that at all. Well, for someone that has thousands of dollars on her car trunk, how will she feel after she's given only 50 reals? Her hands kept grabbing her wallet anxiously but in the end, only uneasiness remained.

"How much did he say 50 reals were?"

"About 30 dollars?" (PR Note: approximately 13USD)

"It's just like a tip."

".....You give a really big tip."

He could feel that he was living on a different world than the person next to him. Emily got surprised and shook her head.

"Ah. Don't misunderstand. I'm not the lavish type. But I use to spend a lot of food when eating. Is it because I feel better?"

"But now, you won't even be able to do that when eating."

"Ughh..... I had to go with a documentary rather than entertainment."

"Even so, didn't you eat various cheap food? You are an epicurean. You have to try this and that."

"It's embarrassing, but epicureans also eat only what they enjoy."

Emily replied while laughing embarrassedly.

So like that, the place Jo Minjoon and the suffering conglomerate went was to a churrasco specialized store on the beach made with brown logs, a churrasqueira. While sitting on a white wooden chair under the parasol, Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings with a refreshed expression. The white sand grains under the sunlight. He could plentily see this scene on the screen, but it was difficult to see it with his own eyes. Most of all, how will he feel when he had a meal on that scenery?

“I wanted to eat something on places like this once.”

“Eat plentifully, although I’m not the one buying it.”

As Emily joked briefly, her face darkened after she saw at the menu. She grumbled with a low voice.

“Maybe it’s because we are on the beach, but it is expensive. To eat without stop like a buffet, 110 reals..... I can’t even dream of this. On one carving it goes from 5 to 10 reals.....At much, 5 times would be the limit.”

“Isn’t 5 times enough?”

“Minjoon, you didn’t eat in Brazil, right? As this is a tourist spot, they are really ill-natured. Most of the places serve you as thinly as paper as if they were doing industrial art.”

“Ei, even so will they slice it as thinly as paper? There’s also cameras running, so they would rather slice it well. And even if they slice it thinly.....”

He put a relaxed smile.

“I can eat 6 times more than you, so it won’t be that of a problem.”

“Hmph, now that I’m not a judge you will act like this, huh?”

“Those words are a bit weird. Even when you were a judge I wasn’t particularly aware.”

“That is indeed right. I raised a tiger. Ei, I don’t know. Here. Look at the menu.”

Jo Minjoon received the menu from Emily. Rear meat, beef tongue, chicken heart, sheep legs, and various other places were written on it. The price was simple. Churrasco, saying it in Korean words if you wanted unlimited refill you had to pay 110 reals. If you didn’t want that, you had to pay every time you received a carving. On top of that, thinking about the tip..... The price was quite burdensome. Jo Minjoon looked at Emily with worrisome eyes.

“Emily. What if we go elsewhere? We don’t have to eat churrasco today.”

“.....You are the first man that treats me like this.”

“What about me?”

“A man that tells me to go elsewhere because I don’t have money! How can this be. I never imagined that in the life of Emily Potter, this moment would come..... Ah, please cut off that dialogue. You knew that it was a joke, right?”

Martin just laughed instead of replying. Emily grabbed her t-shirt and fluttered it. Jo Minjoon glanced at Martin and asked.

“Martin, maybe.....”

“You can’t.”

“Do you even know what I was about to say?”

“You were about to ask me to let the two of you because you will be the one paying. I can’t permit that from the start.”

“It’s fine, Minjoon. I will just give up the churrasco and eat another thing. As I saw, they also sell curry and beef stroganoff.”

“.....Are you really okay?”

“What can I do? That reality is this cold.”

Emily put a smile of that of a protagonist of a tragedy, and soon started to choose on the menu. In the end what she ordered was a 20-real feijoada. It was a dish that had pieces of meat just like osso bucco inside of the black colored bean sauce. Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but get surprised when he looked at that dish. Because for a town food, the score was quite high. The cooking score was 8.

“.....Emily, is this a famous place?”

“I wonder. I don’t know as I also haven’t come here that much. You would know looking at before that I just went to where my feet guided me.”

“But the smell is really good.”

“I wonder if the flavor will also..... Mm. The flavor is also good. Oh, no. It’s not good, but it’s excellent. Well, most of the feijoada are like that. It’s a dish which you put in effort, it’s easy to give it flavor. But instead, that effort is the difficult thing. Do you know how long it takes to make a proper feijoada?”

“How long? I don’t even know what kind of dish that is.”

“Four days. It’s four days. One day on steeping the beans, another day on boiling the meat. And if you boil it again and together with onion, beans, garlic, etc. for a pair of days.....Here, look.”

Emily lifted a piece of meat with her spoon. Between the round beans, the meat was placed above it just like a crown. The well cooked meat seemed tender even at first glance, and the sauce was seeped in it deeply. She thought that it would be difficult to differentiate the flavor of the sauce and the meat that it made her think that it wasn’t mixed up.

Emily soon brought that meat to her mouth. The flavor of the bean that touched her tongue clashed with the strong flavor of the pork. The meat melted down in an instant. Could you express it as having melted a while ago but it barely maintained its shape? But even so, the characteristic of the fibers meat has stimulated her tongue for a moment, a faint happiness could be seen on Emily’s face.

“Ah, I didn’t expect much because it was a churrasco store, but if it’s this much it’s really fine. I can feel that the mind of the chef is upright.”

“.....Is it that delicious?”

“At least for food, I never lie. And.....”

She stopped talking. Next to Jo Minjoon, a man with a big build was standing with a huge skewer and a knife. And on that skewer,

there were many pieces of meat stuck in eat that seemed to be have an arc shape. Picaña. It was one of the most popular churrasco menu for brazilians and was made with a cow's butt meat. An intonation of English accent was heard.

“Shall I slice it for you?”

“Ah, yes.”

The carver softly sliced off a piece of meat. Although for normal people it won't seem that impressive, Jo Minjoon could see it. Slicing meat with an uniform thickness without damaging the composition of the muscles was something normal people couldn't do.

‘.....The cooking score is 7.’

To get a score of 7 just by roasting it, it meant that it was quite well-cooked. And of course, it was also well sliced.

As he sliced off again the sliced meat, a dense carbon aroma and the salt showed the salty and sweet flavor. As the blood flavor of cow meat got mixed with fire, it didn't feel fishy at all. Rather, as he ate it with a sauce made with onions, garlic, chilli sauce, etc. he didn't feel any rejection at all. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Look, Emily. It isn't the thickness of paper.”

“.....I wonder. It can be because of the camera, or perhaps because it's really a considerate store. But what if any of that is the case? In the end, it's something I can't eat. Even so.”

Emily placed feijoada on bread and said.

“It comforts me a bit as this is delicious.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and touched the greenpan that was next to him. The meaning of the pan that was painted with green on the sides and red on the other was simply. Green was I will keep eating, and red was I will stop. But of course, he was still hungry to show the red color.

Personally, what Jo Minjoon ate the most deliciously was the chicken heart. Although the cooking score was only 6, the fresh characteristic of the heart was that it has a chewy texture and a very good feeling that kissed your lips. Next to that, the most delicious thing was, funnily, sausage. The cooking score was 7, but of course it wasn't delicious just because of the score.

The impression Jo Minjoon had about handmade sausages being rough and had a dense flavor, changed in an instant.

The crunchy skin crumbled just like a sugar coating, and the juices that overflow when his teeth softly separate the meat. On top of that, when the aroma of the carbon got melted with the salty flavor, what Jo Minjoon felt was brightness rather than opposition. Could this be being dominated by the flavor? He smiled in a good mood.

“This store will do well.”

“Is it delicious?”

“Yes, really.”

“How good.”

Emily was biting her spoon. It was then. The carver approached and sliced a piece of sirloin smeared with garlic sauce on Jo Minjoon's dish, and then he also asked Emily if she also wanted some. Emily nodded with a surprised expression but soon shook her head.

“I, I want to but I didn't order buffet.”

“It's service. You are pretty.”

At the word of being pretty, Emily smiled by reflexed and then glanced towards Martin. Martin nodded with an expression saying 'I'm letting this specifically pass.' Emily looked at the carver as if she had picked a piece of gold.

“Give me!”

The carver smiled and sliced her quite a thick piece of meat. If it was that thick you would wonder if there were still parts that weren't cooked yet, but was it because pros are pros? Even the sliced part was well cooked.

Martin smiled faintly and looked at that sight. When a person that couldn't eat properly started to eat well, the viewers will feel satisfaction just as if they were the ones that ate it.

‘She would really explode when she knows the truth that at first we were going to go with 10 reals instead of 50.’

Even so, it was fortunate that Emily's temperament wasn't like that. When other participants came and he made the same joke, how would they react.....

‘It's the time for the English literature's tongue to show itself.’

The carver that was passing by looked at Martin licking his lips with weird eyes and then disappeared.

Chapter 119: The Laws Of Tasting (1)

At the hotel, Jo Minjoon laid down on a bed so big you couldn't reach the end of it even if you extended your arms and legs. He had his cellphone on one hand and a smile on his face.

[Ah, so you just made dinner yourself?]

"Yeah. Emily seemed really poor. I negotiated with Martin so that I could buy the ingredients myself and Emily would be able to eat the amount she helped with."

[How gentle. Did she say it suited her taste?]

"I wonder. At least for me, it was a satisfying dish. And even if it doesn't suit her, she's not on a situation where she can complain."

Jo Minjoon smirked. He felt pleased just by thinking that a lady that had lived while not even feeling what hunger and poverty was, acted pitifully in front of money and food. Chloe took in a breath and said.

[So how does Brazil feel? Was the churrasco delicious? Is it different with the ones they sell on America?]

"I don't know well as I didn't eat churrasco in America, but it was a dish that certainly kept it's culture. Onions and garlicks are actually really familiar ingredients. But just by mixing a little bit of chilli sauce or hot sauce, the feeling changed completely."

[That's the charm of a foreign country. That they make a different flavor with the same things. How good. I also want to participate on that kind of program.]

"Is the broadcast you are doing now okay?"

[Today was the first day so how can I say that it's fine or not? Getting accustomed to it comes first. It's not that difficult. The broadcasting time is short and the staffs are also gentle. But of course, they would turn quite mean when I made a mistake

cooking and wasted some time.]

“Even so, looking at you all getting settled makes me feel good. But I don’t know what Anderson will be doing right now. I can contact all the others, but I not him.”

If he said that he didn’t feel disappointed as the friendship they had already cooled, it would be a lie. At the disappointment that could be felt on Jo Minjoon’s voice, Chloe said calmly.

[Anderson will have an Anderson-like reason. You know what kind of guy he is.]

“.....Yes. I do.”

[You still contact a lot right? With.....Kaya.]

At Chloe’s words, Jo Minjoon flinched. He hid the disappointment and said.

“No. But I can’t do anything about it. She would be really busy now.And perhaps, she will get even busier the more time passes.”

[We, too, have to get more busy.]

“Right. Let’s put in more effort.”

Between them, many conversation came and went, and then it ended. After he saw the red screen that indicated the end of the conversation, Jo Minjoon moved his finger. The screen moved a few times and soon, it showed the messages screen.

[Me : Kaya. Call me when you have time.]

The message he had sent two days ago remained lonely. It was a message that hadn’t even been sent. Just how busy is she.....

“Even if she is busy, is it to the point she can’t check a message?”

Jo Minjoon mumbled with a depressed voice, and then he turned off the screen and closed his eyes. Though, he had to wake up again and go to turn off the lights because the white light poked his eyes.

He had to get some sleep, but as he closed his eyes the image of the churrasco appeared in his mind. The big pieces of meat stuck on the long skewer, the pieces of meat you could feel the aroma of the coal and the meat just by looking at it, and the chewy texture.

And the unfamiliarity and primitiveness of the feijoada Emily ate hovered in front of his eyes. But remembering that wasn't simply because he missed the aroma, flavor, or the color. It was because of the shock he got from them.

Actually, he got a deeper impression from the feijoada rather than the churrasco. Honestly speaking, it isn't difficult to cook meat deliciously if you used good ingredients and good coal. And you could say that making it undelicious was rather more difficult. But of course, slicing the meat to have a suitably good texture was quite a high skill, but he wouldn't get a deep impression with just that.

But in the case of the feijoada, it was a bit difficult. Not only for the ingredients, but you needed a long time and dedication. And of course, it was still difficult to make it delicious with just that. The recipe constructed and reconstructed again in a long time, and the experience of it was filled on the small plate.

Looking at that, Jo Minjoon could only imagine how he would run a restaurant on the future; how would he have to manage the kitchen to be able to make a menu that needed several days of preparation; and how will he make the composition of the organization. How local would he make an overseas dish, when and where.

Actually this was all in too far of a future for him to be thinking about it, but what could he do? It wasn't a pondering that the more he thought, the more his head hurt but rather you could say that it was a happy pondering that made a smile appear on his mouth. And just like everyone are like, soon that happiness gifted Jo Minjoon a deep and sweet dream.

While only a calm and peaceful breath and the sound of the clock ticking was heard, another sound was also heard. Click. As the lock got unlocked, the door opened softly. As the sound of the steps permeated on the carpet, soon a sigh was heard.

“.....You sleep as snug as a bug in a rug.”

Maybe it wasn't that big of a voice, but Jo Minjoon didn't wake up by that. The person that looked at the surroundings for a moment looked at the only bed and laid down next to Jo Minjoon as if nothing could be done by it. Soon, the noise lessened again. To the ticking of the clock, and the breath of two people.

—

“Ah fuc*, you surprised me!”

Jo Minjoon, that woke up from his dreams, got surprised and cursed in Korean. He could only do so. The moment he woke up what he saw was Anderson's drooling face. Anderson seemed to have woken up by him, but he rather frowned and closed his eyes more tightly.

(PR Note: This reminded me of Kyou Kara Maou. Very much so.)

“Ah, shut up. Why are you like that?”

“Just why are you here? What's this?!”

“For now shut up or lower your voice. My head is ringing.”

“.....So what's this? I can't comprehend this situation at all.”

“It's bothersome to explain. You are intelligent, so guess as you want.”

Anderson replied with a tired voice and buried his face on the pillow again. Jo Minjoon looked at the blond hair that was over the pillow and organized his thoughts. He was now on a broadcast, and Anderson appeared. For him to appear while knowing the broadcasting place, and he didn't even get restrained by the broadcasting staff when he entered like this could only mean one

thing.

“You also appear? On this program.....?”

“If you know why do you ask?”

“No. But, you should have told me. Just why did you keep it a secret until now?”

“They told me to keep it a secret.”

“Who, Martin?”

Anderson nodded while still having his face buried on the pillow. But Jo Minjoon frowned as if he still couldn't solve the doubt.

“But why are you sleeping on my bed?”

“They told me that my room was this one. There was only one bed, but instead it was big. So isn't it obvious for me to take a place on it? Ah, as I kept talking I got fully awake. It's your fault“

“I couldn't even get awake because of you and rather died.”

“Ugh so noisy. Let me sleep some more. I could only sleep 3 hours.”

“... ..”

Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson's back without saying anything and in the end he stood up from the place. It was a bit perplexing, but he also felt sorry when he couldn't get some sleep. If an American, that was more self preserved compared to anyone, to sleep on the bed that another person was already sleeping at without saying anything, he would really be tired. Jo Minjoon covered Anderson with the blanket that only covered his waist and looked at his surroundings.

“.....Is no one there?”

He whispered lowly while looking at the camera in the ceiling, but of course the reply didn't come back. In the end Jo Minjoon vaguely showered and got out of the room. Anderson was still

sleeping, and it didn't seem like there were people outside. As he dressed up and got outside, one cameraman approached him. Jo Minjoon said with a tired expression.

“Were you waiting until now?”

The cameraman didn't open his mouth like usual. He just smirked and nodded. Could pros really be pros?

“Where's Martin?”

The cameraman pointed to a side of the hall with his finger. It was where the resting room was. One step, ten steps, and when he walked about 25 steps, Jo Minjoon's feet stopped. It was partly because he discovered Martin, but if it was simply that he would have kept walking. There was an unexpected face.

“.....Uh, huh?”

“It's been a while. Minjoon.”

The one that was smiling softly and shaking her hand was no other than Rachel. Jo Minjoon asked with a perplexed face.

“Are you participating here?”

“If that wasn't it, I wouldn't have a reason to be here.”

“Uh.....It's a pleasure to have met again.”

“Rather than being a pleasure, it feels more like bewilderment.”

“Because I am. I can't do anything about it. I also start to think that our relationship is longer than what I thought.”

Rachel smirked.

“If you are thinking that I came here because of you.....although I can't perfectly say no, it's still not it. I want to see your growth, but that's something possible even as a viewer. The reason I'm here is because I also need of this place.”

“Can I ask you why is it?”

“Of course. The reason is simple. It's to show it to the people.”

“Show what?”

Rachel didn't reply immediately. The soft smile slowly started to disappear. When her mouth opened Jo Minjoon felt that his shoulder felt heavier for nothing. These were words that were that heavy.

“That I, Rachel Rose, has returned.”

—

When it was a little past 8, all the participants got outside. While standing on the lobby of the 1st floor of the hotel, Emily was glancing at Rachel. Compared to her age, she was also someone that was quite recognized by Emily, but in front of Rachel even if it was her she couldn't shrink down.

In the case of Anderson, he was glancing at Rachel with another meaning. The eyes filled with envy were so much it made Jo Minjoon, that was looking at him, get goosebumps. If you took into account that she was his role model, no, an idol since childhood, it wasn't that he didn't understand him at all.....

‘It feels like they fell in love.’

The only time Anderson felt like a kid was when Rachel was standing in front of him. But as there is a difference in age those feelings would obviously not be true, but the atmosphere was so different to usual he felt an awkward atmosphere for nothing.

Martin cleared his throat.

“Minjoon, Emily. The two of you would have been quite surprised.”

“.....Will I only have gotten surprised? I think that my neurons got quite burnt because of the shock. I'm thinking of calling a lawyer.”

Emily said with a sulky voice. Martin showed a tricky smile and said.

“Let’s meet the lawyer later on. Let’s also talk about the life of the neurons by then.”

“So, are the members done like this?”

“No. Fortunately not. Additional members will appear in front of you with various methods. But before that, don’t you want to play a little game?”

(PR Note: I got Saw flashbacks)

Martin raised the stick can from yesterday. While Emily and Jo Minjoon were frowning, Rachel asked in a low voice.

“What’s that?”

“Uh.....It’s pulling straws. It’s a straw to decide on the meal fees.”

“Meal fees? I have money.”

“I’m sorry but you can’t use your own money.”

“Why is it?”

Rachel looked at Martin. It wasn’t that she was glaring at him like Emily from yesterday, but Martin felt this moment to be much more burdensome. Martin replied with a careful voice.

“As it’s the first day, let’s do a little joking. To give the viewers a little more of fun.....”

“We must not have money for the viewers to feel fun? And if we have money it’s not fun?”

“No, it’s not certainly like that.....”

“Martin. I’m just asking you. Is it fun when we starve?”

“No. Of course not. That’s why I decided on an amount that would be enough to have three meals a day.....”

“There would be cases that even if it looks delicious, it’s not edible. The person that received more money would eat well next to the other person, and he would feel uncomfortable and sorry for

nothing. Martin, is that tasting?”

Martin couldn't reply anything and just moved his mouth. Rachel said in a low voice.

“Even so, as the PD says so I will have to stop it here. Fine. The straws, I will pull one. But.....did you know that nearby there's a Rose Island branch?”

“Ah, was there?”

“Yes. One of my disciples is running it as the head chef. And as you know, I think that we won't have to pay for it. And of course, that goes for my guests too.”

Rachel smiled brightly and turned to look at the other three. The three looked at Rachel with eyes filled with expectation.

“Everyone, don't you want to become my guests?”

Chapter 120: The Laws Of Tasting (2)

It was unfortunate, but they didn't go to Rose Island. In the end, Martin gave them 150 reals equally. Honestly speaking it was difficult to eat a luxurious meal with that, but even so if you used it normally, it would be enough even after three meals.

“.....Amazing. Rachel. When Emily and I protested he didn't even bat an eye.”

“It's the strength of experience.”

‘It rather seems like money and power.’

But Jo Minjoon didn't say those words. Anderson opened his mouth and said.

“Teacher. If you have something you want to eat can you tell me please? If you don't like to travel to go to a restaurant, I will cook for you.”

“I'm thankful for your thought, but as we come to Brazil shouldn't we feel Brazil's flavor and charm?”

“I thought of this because you said charm, but it would be difficult to see the carnival right?”

“This year's carnival ended 6 months ago. They do carnivals on Februaries.”

Martin replied with a regretful voice and shrugged his shoulders. Jo Minjoon also felt regret at those words and at the same time felt relieved. With Jo Minjoon's character, he would find it difficult to fit in that hot and cheerful atmosphere.

‘Thinking about it, netizens also say that i'm not fun as I look like a neet.’

But of course some may say that that side of him was his charm, but he could only feel bitter.

“Minjoon. What about you?”

“.....Yes?”

“Where do you want to go. A brazilian dish you want to eat, don't you have any?”

Emily asked with a vivid voice. Could she feel grateful because he got on her side and made her dinner yesterday? Her two eyes were filled with a deeper good will. Jo Minjoon slowly shook his head.

“As I told you before, I don't know much about brazilian dishes.”

“Mmm.....How was the feijoada you ate yesterday?”

“It was delicious. Actually I think that it was more delicious than the churrasco. It was a peculiar experience.”

“More delicious than the churrasco..... I think that I vaguely know your preferences in tasting.”

Rachel nodded. First, it was meat. How many people in the world hated meat? On top of that, if it was meat cooked by a profession that had worked for tens of years, the texture of the good quality meat could only be on a different level.

As Rachel wasn't with them yesterday, she wouldn't know the quality of the churrasco and the feijoada, but even so she could know what Jo Minjoon prioritized more on a dish.

Chef. How the thoughts and the methods that cooked it were shown on the dish. Honestly speaking, for things like feijoada, that the process was more complex and took more effort, it could show it more compared to the churrasco.

But of course, if he had a high knowledge on meat, he would be able to read the philosophy and thoughts of the chef with that simple movement of the knife. But even if it was Jo Minjoon, that had a good sense of taste and talent, being able to do that at this age was impossible. Because in the end, that was the role of experience.

‘My.....Take my experience. Minjoon.’

If Jo Minjoon just wanted it, Rachel was planning on becoming his pillar and crag whenever he wished it. She wanted him that much. Jo Minjoon was a gemstone. Although Rachel wasn't a jewel craftsman, she knew a well polished gem more than anyone. She was that gem's wife.

Rachel said.

“How about coffee?”

The people let out an exclamation with an ‘ah’ and nodded. Brazil was so famous with their coffees to the point that they wondered why they couldn't have thought about it until now. Anderson looked at Rachel and carefully opened his mouth. He just seemed like a job hunter that wondered if what he was going to say would be fine.

“Coffee and brunch (TL: Breakfast and lunch)....Thinking about it we won't be able to go with it as we have to take three meals a day. As it's breakfast how about an easy brazilian breakfast?”

“And how is that?”

What Jo Minjoon knew was only english and american breakfast. Anderson shrugged his shoulder and replied.

“Cheese, cold cut, roasted cheese, fruits, cereal, pao de queijo, orange or banana cake. There's no need to have everything in it, and you don't have to only eat that. But normally it's that kind of feeling.”

“I agree.”

Emily said. Rachel and Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon raised both of his hands.

“What can I do if I don't know anything? I can only follow you.”

“Good. Let's go. But teacher, do you have any restaurants that are close in mind?”

“I wonder. I have some, but as it has already been more than 10

years....I wonder if he died or not. That old man is older than me.”

Just how sad was it when surrounding people talked about death so calmly. Rachel put on a bitter smile for a moment and soon put on a composed face again. Looking at that face, Jo Minjoon thought. The reason why wrinkles of old people felt regretful could be because you had to send the people you appreciated so much?

Thinking that she got those deep wrinkles when she was only 60 made him thought that it was because of the grief she felt at the loss of her loved one, he felt choked.

Fortunately, the restaurant Rachel had in mind was only 10 minutes away from them. Actually this was when you took into account Rachel's speed, if it were Jo Minjoon and Anderson they would have arrived in less than 5 minutes.

But walking slowly had advantages on its own. First, you could enjoy the scenery you couldn't watch properly. Actually, there was nothing special about buildings. You could see many antique buildings around, but those were things you could plently see if you went to Europe or the US.

What rather caught your eyes were the people. There were many ethnic groups as it was one of the characteristics of Brazil, but even so the look of black people leaning on a chair below the parasol and conversing leisurely touched them deeply.

“Minjoon, you said that you didn't have much experience on travelling overseas, right?”

“Ah, yes.”

“You did well on deciding to come to this program. If celebrities appear too much on a program, the scarcity may disappear so it is difficult, but we aren't celebrities but chefs. When chefs lose scarcity isn't when they appear on TV a lot but when their dishes turn slow and become congested. You know that there are many restaurants, that received their third star, that can't survive on the

reevaluation right?”

“There are also some that don’t want to receive it because of the burden.”

Anderson butted in. Rachel nodded with a soft expression.

“Right. But the important thing is that the reason why they take away a star isn’t simply because flavor lacks. It’s a three star. A three star. If the head chef doesn’t change, the normal quality would only remain. But even so they have a star taken away. Minjoon. Have you also thought about it? What do you think the problem is?”

Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts for a moment. It was just like Rachel had said. If the head chef didn’t change, the level of the kitchen could also remain the same. Even so the evaluation becomes more strict, what could be the reason then? It was when he was opening his mouth at the end of the pondering. Anderson opened his mouth first.

“Is it because of the inertia?”

“Speak more specifically.”

“The moment they receive a three star, the restaurant is on the best state. Saying it with other words mean that the menu of that moment was at the best. The head chef and the owner would only find it difficult to change the menu. If the menu style gets standardized like that and changes start to disappear.....The evaluation can only turn a little bit stricter.”

“Speaking as an epicurean, it’s not a little bit, but a lot. The kitchen of a chef that doesn’t research and change has no charm at all. Think about it. You have a lover, but if she wears the same clothe today and tomorrow.....On top of that it’s not that they are poor but they simply don’t have the will and care to pick another clothe, how will you feel as their lover? Right?”

Emily butted in in the middle. It was a really girl like

comparison, but they understood it well. Rachel flicked her finger.

“It’s just that. It’s just an epicurean like expression. But in the place of the chef, they can only be like that. If I wear other clothes won’t they be saying that it’s not pretty, and if that’s the case won’t it be better to remain like I am right now? That’s why this moment is important.”

“How is this and that related?”

“It’s obvious that if you invest time and dedication on whatever field, it will get deeper. But if you want to want to be well versed in not only one field, but on a wide one you won’t need normal experience. If you feel a foreign culture and their thoughts, it will be of big help later on. Because your thoughts will broaden. Rather than composing a recipe in a small world, won’t it be more colorful to design it on a wide world?”

At Jo Minjoon’s question, Rachel replied with a low voice. Martin, that was looking at that, felt profoundness. It was certainly an entertainment program but it instantly turned to be an education documentary. But even so, it was important that the picture wasn’t bad. Entertainment doesn’t have to be funny, but interesting. If he just edited it well, he could see some room to make it interesting.

As they conversed for a while, the 10 minutes of travelling distance didn’t even feel that long. The place they reached was on a building that gave a feeling of restoration. The walls made with red bricks, and the windows made with a white plastic material you could see it was recently changed. And the roof made with red ceramic tiles. It gave off a feeling that made you think if you asked children to draw a house, they would draw exactly this one.

It was difficult to say that customers overflowed, but even so there weren’t that many empty tables. And it gave a strong feeling that most of the customers weren’t tourists, but customers. Because rather than having dressed up well, it was an atmosphere

that they just dressed up casually and came out for a walk. Emily nodded as if it was satisfying.

“Certainly, to know about a proper flavor it would be better to go to a restaurants where residents come more than the tourists.”

Rachel didn't reply and kept tilting her head towards the kitchen. Soon, one female worker approached and spoke in an english that could be seen it was memorized.

“If you seat daun I will teik your order.” (If you seat down, I will take your order)

“No. That's not it.....Is Douglas here?”

Rachel spoke with a flawless portuguese. The worker replied with a brighter face. This time, she also spoke in portuguese.

“Douglas?Ah. Are you a friend of the previous boss?”

“Previous?”

“Ah, don't worry. He didn't leave or anything like that. Nowadays he's retired and is resting. He does come to the store at times.....But I wonder. I don't know if he would come or not.”

“And who's the boss now?”

“Mister Douglas's daughter. She's called Kamila.....”

“Ah.....Right.”

Rachel sat down while replying with a weird face. Maybe he had already died, but could it be because she was expecting him to work in the store like the memories she had? While even she had left the kitchen and the restaurant and retired. She smiled calmly and turned to look at everyone.

“You said you wanted to eat brazilian breakfast, right? Tell me if you want to eat anything else. There's the recommended menu, and the menu you should never eat.”

“.....Didn't you bring us here because they have skills?”

“Just because the face is pretty, it doesn’t mean that the body is also pretty.”

In the end Jo Minjoon chose the brazilian breakfast in the middle of the uneasiness. And he also ordered feijoada. He wanted to feel moved again just like when he ate a spoon of Emily’s feijoada. And even the price wasn’t that burdensome. The two together was only 25 reals.

‘The churrasco store from yesterday was the expensive side.’

It was a buffet, and as it was located on a beach, it made sense. At the same time he also thought. To serve the customers with good ingredients the most economically possible, they would have to move to somewhere where the land is cheap.

‘But if the land is cheap, there won’t be many good places where there are a lot of tourists.....’

Whatever side it was, it wasn’t a problem to be thinking about it now. The worker came with plates. Depending on the contents of the brazilian breakfast, the price and the amount varied like heaven and earth, but Jo Minjoon ordered the most ordinary thing. He also wanted to eat a well breakfast that brazilians ate, but he was also worried to get full because of the feijoada.

Jo Minjoon looked at the dish placed in front of him. A french roll bread baked like portuguese, ham made by slicing off the meat of the back leg of a pork and fermented, baked pao de queijo that had half papaya and cheese in it, a cold stored mozzarella and cheese and corn cake came out.

What he ate first was the pao de queijo. The name was unfamiliar, but the moment he ate it, the texture and the flavor it gave was quite familiar. The feeling and the texture of the bread was like glutinous rice bread, and between that rough bread, there was the spreading aroma of the cheese. The cooking score was 6. It wasn’t that amazing but.....

‘If I had this next to me, I would eat it until I was full.’

It wasn't that it was overly delicious, but it had a faint charm, an addictive flavor. But he couldn't keep eating only that. There wasn't that much but also what came first was trying the other dishes too.

As he placed ham and mozzarella on the roll bread and ate it, honestly speaking he didn't feel any special flavor. Jo Minjoon, that was staring at it, turned to look at the feijoada. And then glanced at the others.

‘.....They won't think weirdly of me, right?’

Jo Minjoon poured feijoada over the bread with a calm attitude, as if it was nothing. But at that moment, contrary to his expectations, the three turned to look at him. Could they be thinking that he had done something strange? It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was laughing awkwardly. Emily said as if it was unexpected.

“Minjoon. You prefer pouring soup over the bread?”

“What about it?”

“Mm.....Won't it be better to stick it and eat it? The thick soup gets crushed on the bread, and when you pull the bread it gives the feeling as if you are pulling from a marsh. And the soup seeps in between the bread and the aroma turns better.”

“I wonder. When I stick it on the bread the soup doesn't adhere as much as I think, and placing things over the bread is also uncomfortable. Most of all, if you eat it by pouring it the texture of the soup feels more clear. Anderson. How about you?”

“You have to stick it. That's more comfortable. If you pour it with a spoon, if you make a mistake you stain your fingers and you get dirty.”

Jo Minjoon chewed down the bread with a sulky expression. Then, Rachel said while smiling brightly.

“I also like pouring it. If you stick it, breadcrumbs enter the soup and the texture gets faintly rough so I don’t like it.”

“Ah, even so there’s someone at my side.”

At Rachel’s words, Jo Minjoon smiled as if he had been rescued. Anderson, that was looking at the two of them, cleared his throat and said.

“Actually, thinking about it, I pour it more than sticking it. Although it’s uncomfortable it’s more delicious, and just like teacher said, I also hate the breadcrumbs getting in my soup.....”

The eyes of the three people directed towards Anderson. Anderson turned his eyes to the dish with a slightly embarrassing look and said.

“.....Tastes are diverse.”

Chapter 121: The Laws Of Tasting (3)

When breakfast was about to end, Martin opened his mouth.

“Martin, I think that it’s about time to ask, but can I ask?”

“Are you talking about the recipe?”

“Yes. I don’t even hope for the recipe. Can you guess all of the ingredients right?”

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes for a moment. He slowly saw the ingredients over the system window. Even the small differences that Kaya, that was closer to having the real absolute taste, couldn’t read was written there. If they asked him on what state and from what bean they used, he could do so.

‘Until where would be good to control it?’

It was important to show his abilities on a line where people could get convinced. Jo Minjoon slowly opened his mouth.

“If I had to tell you one thing it would be that it’s all Brazilian.”

“.....What did you say?”

“They are all ingredients grown in Brazil.”

Jo Minjoon talked up to there and pointed the menu while smirking. ‘We only use domestic ingredients.’ Looking at the phrase written in Portuguese and below in English, Martin let out a sigh. He wondered if this youth was now able to even guess the nationalities of the ingredients.

‘At that point, it’s not a tongue of a person.’

He calmed down his heart that got surprised for nothing and he opened his mouth once again.

“Don’t tease us. And the ingredients? Do you know? This is certainly difficult, right? As it’s been boiled for some days, the texture should be overripe and the flavor scattered.....”

Jo Minjoon ate one more bite of the feijoada instead of replying. And then he calculated how many ingredients he could guess right with his tongue. It wasn't that bad. If he got 4, 5 ingredients right from 10.....He was now confident on being able to get at least 7 right.

Perhaps if he returned to the day when he faced the eliminating mission, he would be able to perfectly survive without the strength of the system. It was that much. But still, compared to Kaya the basic sensitivity of his tongue would fall back, but it was certainly more trained. It was more sensitive. Jo Minjoon smiled with a confident face.

“I wonder. The flavor didn't scatter that much. I can feel black beans, and other than black beans, kidney beans.....Ah, I can also feel a bit of lentils. This place is a bit peculiar? The place we went yesterday only had black beans and kidney beans, but here they also put in lentils. For the pork meat they used the back part of the rib.....Ah, in addition, it wasn't that they sliced the meat and put it in. They boiled the back rib, and when the meat got soft to the point it would melt they ripped it off. I can certainly feel the flavor of bone stock.”

“.....You can feel that?”

“It's felt. If the stock was something as meaningless as its flavor can't even be felt, why would people suffer to make that stock?”

He wasn't simply lying by relying on the system. As he ate it while he knew what ingredients it had, the flavor was certainly felt. But of course, if he didn't have the strength of the system he wouldn't be able to feel it to this extent.....

There's a saying that says 'Know by eating.' Actually, when chefs from high classed restaurants explain to the customers how they used the ingredients and cooked, it isn't simply to make them feel that they are being served.

“Aside from that there's garlic, bayleaf, bacon with black pepper,

onions with olive oil, and there's one more thing.....”

Jo Minjoon talked slowly and then he smirked and shrugged his shoulders.

“It's a flavor I don't know of. It's the first time I try it.”

“.....Ah, yes. Right. Even if your sense is sensitive you wouldn't be able to guess the name of an ingredient you don't know. What's the flavor?”

“I wonder. It feels like a bitter flavor and sweet flavor mixed.....It seems like a fruit, and also like medicine, it's vague. It also seems that there's not that big of an amount.”

Actually he could clearly see the name on the system window. But if he said that word, it would be felt too weirdly. Because it was too unfamiliar. At that moment, Rachel opened her mouth.

“Annona Cacans.”

“.....Yes?”

“The flavor you say you don't know. It's Annona Cacans. It's a fruit that only grows on Brazil and Paraguay. It's a fruit animals called pacarana meat, but if people eat too much of it, you can get a heavy diarrhea so it's a fruit you only eat a small amount of it. Actually, depending on how ripe it is, the bitterness is too strong and you aren't able to eat it.”

“So you say that thing was inside of the feijoada?”

“I told you, Martin, that I was acquaintanced with the store owner.”

Martin nodded with an amazed expression. Martin seemed like he wanted to ask something more, but perhaps it was because he couldn't let his voice go to the broadcast anymore, that he shut his mouth. But could his begging feeling have been felt? The next moment Anderson was asking what he wanted to ask.

“But why do they put something as dangerous as that that may

get you heavy diarrhea in it? And the flavor isn't that amazing."

"If you are a chef, you should know. One drop of vinegar. That from something that isn't particularly amazing, it can completely turn over the balance of the dish. Douglas, so I mean the person that developed that menu, believed that he would be able to make the feijoada more delicious with that annona cacasns."

"I wonder if there was that kind of difference."

Jo Minjoon hesitated for a moment and opened his mouth. It seemed like he was cutting down on Rachel's friend so he decorated his words, but even so it could be felt that it wasn't a compliment.

"The passion for utilizing unfamiliar ingredients is of course amazing. But I have my doubts on whether the results came out according to that passion. Honestly speaking, that vague bitter flavor that roamed on my mouth rather made it not crumble easily, but it also made me not want to put it on my mouth that much."

It was the same to putting medicinal herbs when boiling pig trotters or bossam(보쌈). It was different to using medicinal herbs or special spices on China to make the stock. The unique bitterness of the fruit, and the flavor that is even astringent, rather than stimulating weakly it made your tongue and mouth tired for nothing. Jo Minjoon's face soon froze. He wouldn't know about other things, but he would never yield when it came to cooking.

"Beating around the bush just makes my mouth tired. I will just say it simply. It's not delicious. Honestly, it's to the point it falls back to the other dishes. And the reason to that is also clear. Just why did he put that thing?"

"I understand you."

Rachel replied shortly. Looking at her nodding as if his comment was something obvious, he could only get perplexed.

“If you quibbled over flavor, you would have many points to talk about. And actually, if you want to make an excuse for that, you can do so. Minjoon. Do you know the history of feijoada?”

“No. I haven’t particularly heard of it.”

“You know that Brazil was originally a place that had black people as slaves, right? Feijoada received its name when slaves that were hungry and had nothing to eat grabbed things like pork ear, tail, and pig trotter which their owners threw away and boiled it along a bean called feijoa. Saying it easily, it’s a dish made through exhaustion.”

It was something he didn’t know about. Somehow, you could see it as the Korean piggy stew (꿀꿀이죽).

“And that was the same in Brazil 50 years ago. The Brazil from back then and the Brazil that had slaves, arguing about which one was more poor was a funny thing to do..... But one thing is certain. Douglas, no, people from Douglas’s era and the ones from his time starved to the point they had to make feijoada with putting annona cacans in it. Even while knowing that diarrhea would follow that.”

The atmosphere turned heavy. Emily said with a wet voice as if she was a bit moved.

“It’s a dish that has more history than what I thought.”

“Right. But of course, even if that’s the case, the disadvantages Jo Minjoon said can’t be free at all. Whatever the case, a non delicious dish is the worst just with that. But the reason I brought this up was not because you are only epicureans. Anderson, Minjoon. You are chefs. A chef that focuses on making something delicious, and the feeling of seeking customers that seek for their dishes. I believe that you will be able to feel something aside of flavor.”

Jo Minjoon and Anderson looked at their surroundings without any word. Now that they saw, the customers that ordered feijoada

were quite old ones. He thought of the grandfathers and grandmothers working on the market eating kimchi jjigae with some kimchi, a little bit of pork, and using clear water and not even stock. He felt a corner of his heart getting sad.

“It’s not a fine dish. And the recipe is really hopeless. But even so, it has it’s own worth. The proof? It’s simple. There are people looking for it, it means that the dish has some worth.”

The cameraman slowly looked at the other tables. It was then. A thick, rough and split voice showed itself like a turtle showing its head outside slowly.

“I don’t know if it’s a praise or badmouthing. Kamila. You tell me. Should I get angry or should I express thanks?”

“The certain thing is that you can’t get angry. It’s not good for your health. What will you do if you collapse because of the high pressure?”

“Righ. I understand. I have to hold it in. Just why did that old hag with that dirty temperament that even badmouthed my dishes that it was like cow shit come to eat my dishes again?”

“It’s been a while. Douglas. How long has it been?”

“As we didn’t see after Daniel died, it must be 10 years.”

“It already became like that. You also aged a lot.”

“Just looking at our faces, I wonder if we may be the same age. You didn’t receive skin treatment with that big money you accumulated? Your face is filled with wrinkles. Tch tch.”

At first, it may seem that he was making fun of her, but regret was buried on his eyes and voice. Perhaps, inside that rough voice and deep eyes, there would be cases and years which they didn’t know about. But they couldn’t ask them now, and there was no need to.

It was then. Jo Minjoon’s smartphone rang. He thought he had

put it on silence, but did he put it on vibrate? The moment he was about to press the end call button unconsciously, his fingers stopped. Anderson, that looked at that Jo Minjoon, looked at the name that popped up on the screen and frowned. Then talked to Martin.

“Can we get some time to rest?”

“Yes? Why so suddenly?”

“Teacher Rachel seems like she needs some time to catch up with her old friend.....”

Anderson glanced at Jo Minjoon.

“He also seems urgent to go to the toilet.”

—

Because of Anderson’s consideration that was filled with good and bad will, Jo Minjoon could in the end place the smartphone on his ear while standing on the toilet. He heard some static for a moment and then, a faint voice was heard.

[Minjoon?]

He thought that the voice was faint because of the static, but as he listened well that wasn’t it. It was simply because that person was exhausted and couldn’t put in strength in that voice.

“Yeah. It’s me.”

[I’m sorry. I just checked your message. I didn’t even have the time to charge my cellphone. Even so, among the many accumulated messages, I called you first. So you can’t be sad, understood?]

“What reason do I have to feel bad? If you are busy, I can’t do a thing about it.”

[.....Right. You wouldn’t. I know. I just said it.]

The conversation stopped for a moment. Jo Minjoon just held his

smartphone on his ear. Kaya's faint breath seemed like it rang right next to him.

“Are you tired?”

[Does it show that much?]

“Just from your way of talking, you don't have any energy. Did something happen?”

[Yes.]

As she replied with a really calm voice, Jo Minjoon rather got surprised. Kaya's smirking sound could be heard and soon, she said with her usual voice.

[But don't worry. Even if something happened, I always solved it. But of course, you did help me a lot, but now I can do it myself. No, I have to do it myself. That's why I called you. That if later on something comes on the news.....There's nothing to worry about. I wanted to tell you this.]

“.....News? What is that genuine? Did that big of a scandal occur?”

[No, it's not something big.....Anyways, I don't want to tell you. If I explain it to you, it makes me want to rely on you. Just tell me how it is over there. I'm curious as to how you are playing.]

“I'm sorry. I want to do so, but as I came out a little bit in the middle of broadcasting, I can't do so. If it was night, I may be able to.....Where are you right now?”

[Australia. Brisbon.]

“The time zone.....Damn, as I searched, it's 12 hours. You are exactly on the other side of the earth.”

He forcefully laughed. Until just now, she was right next to him cooking and eating together. Kaya said.

[I will be waiting. If it becomes night, call me. If I can take it, I will certainly do so. I want to talk with someone. I can't show

myself properly in front of these people.....It's somewhat suffocating.]

“Right. I will. Even so, don't wait too much.”

[If it's night for you, it's morning or the afternoon for me anyways. Don't worry.]

“Right. I won't.”

[.....There's no need to also say that.]

At the depressed voice, he laughed for nothing. The story he heard from Rachel about the feijoada and her friend Douglas, the shoulders that become quite heavy turned one step lighter.

“I will call you.”

The call ended. Jo Minjoon, that was looking at the screen with a smile, soon tilted his head at the doubt.

Just what would be the thing Kaya talked about?

Chapter 122: The Envelope That Embraces The Street Stall (1)

A languid sigh fell on the room. Kaya leaned down on a pillow as big as her upper body. She felt dizzy. Her calf and her hands were numb, and she had a slight fever. But the pain was secondary. The mental exhaustion was too severe.

As soon as she closed her eyes, she remembered the things that happened in New York, before she came to Brisbon. When she went to her old house that she couldn't organize yet because of her daily work, a familiar but not welcoming face went to look for her. It was Tess Gilly, the one who wrote bad things about her on the internet. Her family stopped her at first, but Kaya didn't dodge her. She didn't want to.

And the conversation they got to have like that was held in a calmer atmosphere than thought. In a room so small it made them stifled, Tess looked around the room with sickened eyes. And soon, she sneered and put on a vigilant smile.

"Now, you will also get out of this dirty house. You succeeded. Kaya Lotus. I acknowledge you."

"I don't really need your acknowledgement."

"Don't act that hard. We were once friends?"

"Right. In past tense just as you are speaking."

"There's one thing that's in present."

Tess talked like that and raised her golden hair that was covering the right half of her face. And below her hair, there was a scar that seemed to have been from a knife, that ran all the way down her chin. Tess took in a breath roughly and said as if she was spitting it.

"There won't come the day when this scar turns past tense."

“What is it you want to say? No, what do you want from me?”

In Kaya’s voice there wasn’t sympathy nor pity. In the case of Tess, she had the scar on her face, but Kaya had a scar on her soul that would remain for life. Kaya said in a cold voice.

“In the first place, do you still want to say that that scar was done by me?”

“You pushed me, and I fell, and I scratched my chin with an edge. Did I do something wrong here?”

“You didn’t say anything wrong, but there’s something you didn’t say. You should also tell the story before that. That a bitch like you that acted like my friend wanted to lynch me.”

“.....The one that made the situation like that was you.”

Tess was looking at her with resentful eyes. Just like she was speaking as if she was the victim. Kaya said with a young contempting voice.

“Sexual criminals always say the same thing. That the victim seduced them. That they don’t have any sin. You just resemble them. Still.”

“You were my only friend. All the others felt fake. You had something called realism, and was someone that knew how to think. You know, Kaya. That’s why I hate you even more. You made me lose her. My friend.”

Her eyes shook dangerously. Only then did Kaya realize that Tess’s hands were shaking like someone suffering from parkinson. When she felt that, Tess hurriedly pulled her arm back and stood up.

“I don’t want to see you doing well. And I also don’t want people to see you as someone nice, and as someone understandable. But I won’t upload comments like that anymore. Because it also annoys me that my name comes out of other people’s mouth. And.”

Tess smiled while facing Kaya's fierce eyes.

"I know you. However you end, you will demolish everything by yourself. I will be waiting for it, how you will turn out. Ah, and one more thing. I will tell you one good news. You saw last time, right? Jessica Prada. Right. The woman that sought you out. There's something that woman told me."

Tess whispered at Kaya's ear. At that instant, Kaya froze like ice and couldn't do anything. Tess smiled like a winner and left, but even so she couldn't curse out freshly.

She was still angered by that. On the bed. As she heard Jo Minjoon's voice, she got a bit more comfortable but..... As she still couldn't let out everything deep in her heart, a corner of it was still heavy. But she couldn't say that. She didn't want to. She was also an adult. Not a child. She felt too sorry for him to always be relying on him. Kaya rolled her body and embraced the pillow.

".....Right. It would be weird for the life of Kaya Lotus to be going so well."

The last words Tess left her still roamed in her ear.

'Congratulations. Your father is looking for you.'

—

Time flowed so fast you would think that a day was this short. The next day at night, Jo Minjoon grabbed his swollen belly and was getting on the plane again. But of course, he wasn't returning already. He was only moving to the next travelling place.

Everyone was surprised as they hadn't imagined that they would be moving in only two days, but Martin spoke with a non-important voice that Brazil was only to taste the opening.

The day before, he did call Kaya but only the signal became longer. For Kaya, it was certainly a busy time because she had to participate in the events that opened in various places of the world.

“Minjoon, where did you travel to until now?”

“There’s nowhere aside of the US. Ah, now I will have to add Brazil.”

“The place we are going now will also be the first?”

“Yes.”

“It will be quite fun. They say that it’s the country with the most developed street stalls.”

Jo Minjoon just gulped instead of replying. He thought of a covered wagon (포장마차). Honestly speaking, the owners of the wagons didn’t have amazing cooking skills, but strangely enough it felt like he had never thrown his mouth away over there. Could he get easily satisfied as he doesn’t have that big of an expectation?

Looking at it on one side, you would be able to see street stalls as certainly having the most fundamental points in cooking. The people visiting street stalls are always busy and famished people, and those kind of people would be able to eat anything deliciously any time. And because they eat a meal quite nicely, there won’t be more of a stable choice than a stall.

He thought of the restaurant they went this morning by Rachel’s guidance. He thought of the feijoada that was lacking in flavor. Even if Jo Minjoon was to make a really good dish, and if he were to make a 10-point dish and serve it to customers.....After some days passed, they would turn around and say. ‘Douglas, can you give me some feijoada?’

Although he didn’t agree that a dish could be not delicious, it was a meal that made him feel how many things a dish could have aside of flavor. A snug feeling high-class restaurants can’t have. If he wasn’t envious of it, that would be lying.

‘Won’t there be a restaurant that has all of that?’

Actually, he knew that there wasn’t. At least, it was like that for Jo Minjoon’s common sense. When Kaya said that she wanted to

sell cheap and good quality food, didn't he think that it lacked realism as soon as he heard it?

Jo Minjoon turned to look at Rachel unconsciously, who was at the back seat. He got the hope that if it was her, she would have the answer. But he throwing that question didn't happen. Maybe she was tired, but it seemed like she was trying to sleep as she closed her eyes. Anderson, that was next to her, raised his brow as if asking what did he want. Jo Minjoon shook his head and sat down.

"It seems like you have something to ask her?"

"I just had a thought. If I would be able to run a restaurant that has all the positive qualities that comes and goes between the customers."

"That's a nice thought. It would be good if I could answer that for you, but the only thing I know how to do is to eat."

"Emily, you don't have anything like that? A perfect restaurant that would only appear on dreams."

At Jo Minjoon's words Emily moaned and closed her eyes. Quite a long time passed for her to reply. It wasn't that her thoughts got long. The plane that was driving on the runway started to float on the air. At the moment's feeling, Jo Minjoon smiled. He did seem like a child, but every time a plane got off, he felt amazement for nothing and he always smiled.

But Emily was the opposite. She grabbed the armrest tightly with a frightened face and when the plane stabilized a little, she barely sighed.

"I'm really scared of this. This is why I don't ride things like rollercoasters, but I can't not ride a plane..... What were we talking about?"

"A restaurant you wished you had."

"Mmm..... A restaurant that handles dishes of all countries of

the world, but honestly speaking as you won't be able to eat it all at once it will be meaningless, right?"

"You don't know. If you go there a lot it may hold some meaning. But will there be a need to only be on one place?"

"If it's near your house, the story changes. Near your house, a place that has everything you want to eat, on top of that dishes that are perfect. Don't you have any thoughts of running a restaurant like that?"

"I'm really scared of this. This is why I don't ride things like rollercoasters... but I can't not ride a plane..... What were we talking about?"

Jo Minjoon thought. If he could just do it, it wasn't a bad proposition. But.

"It's difficult. No, impossible. Even if I were to master dishes of all the world..... Always being supplied with those many ingredients freshly will be impossible for anyone."

"Ey, how can you face reality like that on an age you have to have many dreams? So boring."

At Emily's words Jo Minjoon smirked. Although his real age was enough to face reality rather than dreams, even so he didn't dislike those words. Emily asked with a gentle voice.

"Your dream of becoming a chef is still up, right?"

"It's a truth so clear like that the hair of Emily is blonde."

"Uh, I dyed it."

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth absentmindedly for a moment and was at a loss for words. Emily smiled merrily and said.

"I'm joking. Don't put those eyes."

".....I got really perplexed as to what to reply for a moment."

"Anyways, I also feel good seeing that your dream didn't falter. I

think that I was just seducing someone that was walking his own path really well for nothing.”

Emily talked up to there and then yawned while covering her mouth. Jo Minjoon asked.

“Are you sleepy?”

“I am but.....Thinking about the food I will eat when I arrive, I feel flustered. Aren’t you like that?”

“Flustered.....”

Jo Minjoon placed his hand over his heart for a moment. And then nodded.

“I think so. Actually if I were to choose between flavor, texture, and aroma, I put importance to aroma the most. Because the factor that shows the colour of the food the most is in there. Honestly speaking, the aroma is the best worldwide.”

“Taking into account that you have an absolute sense of taste, it’s an unexpected answer.”

“.....Take that into account, but I’m also worried about the language. There were some people in Brazil that knew how to sloppily speak in English at least.”

“What’s there to worry about when we have body language?”

Emily twisted her hand and put on a comic face.

Time flowed. A distance of 20 hours. One transference, three in flight meals, and one snack. When five drinks and a deep sleep passed, the tasting country they were expecting under the fluster was below their feet.

The country of freedom, country of tasting, and the country of fun.

Thailand.

Chapter 123: The Envelope That Embraces The Street Stall (2)

Thailand and Japan were the most famous powerhouses in cooking for asians. Although you could also see some strong points in chinese cuisine, because of most of the chinese residing overseas the food got culturalized according to the country but compared to that japanese and taiwanese cuisine didn't lose it's colour as easily.

That's why there were many cases where eating taiwanese food in the US or Europe is considered like a sophisticated tasting preference.

Pataya. That's the region where they arrived. It was also one of the famous relaxation cities together with Bangkok. His heart was already filled with expectation. Thinking about the emerald light beach they would see soon and the lined up stalls in the streets with various colours, everyone could only put on a happy smile.

However when they finished the immigration procedures and were about to leave the airport, they could only cool down their excited hearts. Martin talked to them with an expression you couldn't know the meaning of.

"I have a mission to give you."

".....A mission?"

"Ah, there's no need to be that wary. You just have to concentrate on your tasting lifestyle like usual. You came all the way to Thailand, and just like teacher Rachel said before you have to fill your bellies well. Today, specially, we will also give you unlimited meal fees."

As he came out that honestly, they felt rather uneasy. Emily opened her eyes sharply and asked.

"And?"

“Yes. And there’s one reason why i’m giving you this much consideration. Accomplish a mission.”

“.....Just what kind of mission is it?”

“There’s no need to think about it that seriously. The mission isn’t that hard. Every time you eat a meal anywhere, you will be given one point. And for each point, you will be given one hint.”

“What hint?”

“The place where the next participants are.”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon let out an exclamation with an ‘ah’. Well, Martin had already said it last time too. That Anderson and Rachel wouldn’t be the last. Martin continued saying in a calm voice.

“Two participants are waiting for you. And now you will be divided in two teams.”

“We are each finding one?”

“Yes. If perhaps, you are lucky and fast witted, after you empty one dish and get a really important hint you will be able to complete the mission immediately. And there’s one more thing you have to know.”

Martin paused for a moment. When the eyes of the four of them were filled with stuffiness, he opened his mouth.

“The team that finds the participants first will be able to spend the night in the most expensive penthouse in Pattaya. Well, for the team that got late will be only a hotel.”

At those words Emily’s eyes shone. You would wonder what meaning was there for a daughter from a house with a lot of money, but rather because that was the case she knew the value of the prize Martin gave even more. She quickly asked.

“How do we make the teams?”

“I would like to say to make the teams freely.....But

unfortunately, the participants that will appear today are related to you. Emily, Rachel. Today, you won't be able to form a team."

".....It's a bit confusing, but the both of them are people we know?"

"No. There's one acquaintance for Emily and one for you. So you will each have to face your own friends."

Rachel didn't reply and fell in her thoughts. As he said acquaintance, she could only feel more uneasy. She didn't meet anyone for 10 years after her husband died. It could only be difficult to hear good things with whoever she met. She remembered the words she shared with Douglas yesterday.

'Are you planning to raise that guy instead of Daniel?'

What did she answer to that? It was when she was thinking like that. Rachel slightly turned her head at the gaze she felt. Anderson tried not to show it, but he kept glancing at her. Rachel smiled bitterly inwardly. She had only cooked for her a few times and treated him well when he was a kid, but it seemed like Anderson engraved that goodwill too deeply in his heart.

But of course, it wasn't that she disliked Anderson's attitude. Who in the world will be able to hate someone that adored and liked you? Rather, she also felt sorry. Compared to Anderson's feelings, she was paying too much attention on Jo Minjoon.

"I will go with Anderson."

At Rachel's words, Anderson put on an absentminded expression as if he was surprised and then smiled brightly. Martin looked at that Anderson and smirked, and then asked Emily.

"It seems like the two of them decided like that, don't you have any objections?"

".....Whatever I say, it doesn't seem like he will come with me. For me it's good going with Minjoon, but will he like it?"

Emily turned to look at Jo Minjoon. He grabbed his bag and said.
“What will we eat first?”

—

There were four things that took their attention the most while walking Pattaya's street. The first was the face of the king. TV, posters, bills and also in taxis. It was to the point that you would remember his face for life even after walking Thailand's streets for a day.

The staff advised with a careful voice. Under no circumstances should they point the face of the king with their fingers. He said that Thailandeses treated the king almost like a living buddha, so if it seemed like they were being even a little bit disrespectful they would get caught for blasphemy.

The next thing they saw the most was funnily things related to hallyu. He had only heard the word and never experienced it.....But listening the K POP that was turned on stations or stores, he got a weird feeling. Could it be said being proud and embarrassed? He felt like a kid that got up on a school art stage. But of course, no one would pay him any mind.

The remaining two were envelopes and stalls. Thailandeses, that didn't have kitchens in their houses and didn't even know the concept of house meal, tended to eat a meal on a street stall. The result of that was that the culture of packing food simply developed, and looking at the transparent envelopes over the kiosks, he felt a really marvelous feeling. Night. The street tainted with the light of the sunset, and the many shapes hidden in the transparent things.....

But of course, it wasn't that everyone had packed their food. The kiosk Jo Minjoon and Emily were seated on was like that. Over a white and yellow dough heated in a steel pan with coconut oil, banana, strawberry jam and condensed milk was sprinkled.

The banana that was sliced by the half moon knife got placed in front of the lotti and Jo Minjoon and Emily shared it amiably. They had to eat many dishes a bit quicker and acquire points. Even so, as they wanted to enjoy more dishes, ordering one dish and eating it the two of them was a limit.

The cooking score was 5. But looking at the ingredients it contained, it couldn't be not delicious. Inside the soft and sticky flour dough, the faintly spreading aroma of the coconut. When the banana that had condensed milk met with the strawberry jam, Jo Minjoon laughed unconsciously. Emily opened her eyes roundly and asked.

“Why are you like that?”

“Haha.....As it's too sweet and delicious, I feel like I made a sin.”

Honestly speaking, it wasn't a good dish. At least in Jo Minjoon's standards, it was like that. However on the stimulation of the flavor, it was certainly stronger. Because that was the charm of food.

“There are many more things finer than this. Come here.”

Emily lead Jo Minjoon and moved. The sun was setting on the east with the sea, and the store owners were lighting a small lamp for the night.

Between the full stores, the sight of tourists and natives seating in seats that were so small to even seat caught his attention. Why could it be? That he felt a calm and warm feeling in that busy and non leisure sight.

“It's good. Here.”

“It would be one of the most romantic places in Asia.”

At Emily's words Jo Minjoon nodded. It was then. A loud voice was heard from a store. A youth that was wearing white runnings and shorts and was bulky was frowning while leaving the half eaten roasted chicken in front of him. From his mouth, a rough

english intonation was heard.

“Hey, owner. Why is the state of the chicken like this? It’s too tough. Aren’t you using something past the expiration date?”

“Uhh..... I, can’t speak english well.”

“Only english? You also can’t cook. There’s also burnt traces in here. As you sell this, you also don’t have any conscience.”

As the owner was a bit dwarfish and old, he couldn’t reply anything and just smacked his lips with a perplexed face. The surrounding people did frown, but they didn’t butt in. Whether they were tourists or natives, they wouldn’t want to get mixed in things like this. On top of that, the one picking a fight was really muscly so it was quite overbearing. Honestly speaking, no one would want to mess with him.

Jo Minjoon just looked at the actions that youth did. His eyes were quite fierce compared to usual. If there were people that liked to stack and pile up things, there were also people that liked to destroy that and say whatever they wanted. And Jo Minjoon had never allowed the actions of those kind of people.

“Minjoon. Endure it.”

He didn’t reply. He was already enduring it. Because he was enduring it, he was standing still. But there was a reason why Jo Minjoon could get angrier than others. And that wasn’t because he was a chef. It was because he could see the cooking score of the chicken. Compared to how the youth was implying, he knew really well that it was a fine dish.

[Thailandese chicken breast barbecue]

Freshness: 96%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 6

The cooking score was fine coming from a cheap dish, and the freshness and the quality were also good. At least, it wasn't a store that would mess with food. Because of that, he couldn't consent at all those proofless criticism.

And soon, when the youth turned over the dish and the chicken fell on the ground, Jo Minjoon had to stand up in the end. Emily hurriedly extended her hands, but Jo Minjoon was already walking forwards for her hands to grab her.

Jo Minjoon, that walked in front, grabbed the chicken that fell in front of the man that had his face reddened. The youth looked at Jo Minjoon with a perplexed face. No, it wasn't only the youth. Emily, the owner, the staff and the tourists that were watching all looked at Jo Minjoon. Some were already raising their cellphones and pressing the record button.

And under those sights, Jo Minjoon chewed down the chicken that had dirt. There was also a time where he grabbed the norimaki a jerk customer threw. But this time, it wasn't simply thrown food, but it fell on the ground and got covered in dirt and sand. But even so, Jo Minjoon didn't hesitate. Because only after he ate this chicken would he be able to say something to this youth.

Some let out exclamations as if it was dirty and some that it was amazing. The sand got chewed between his teeth and disappeared. Jo Minjoon chewed the meat and sand still and looked at the man. He flinched for a moment, but looking at Jo Minjoon's body that wasn't too big he broadened his chest as if he had gotten himself.

“What are you doing right now?”

“It's delicious. The meat isn't tough but chewy. It's not overcooked and the exterior that got burnt was seared on purpose. It's not that it got burnt.”

“What.....?”

“I’m saying that your evaluation is wrong. And also saying that the criticism you spewed was also wrong.”

Jo Minjoon said with a composed voice. But on his eyes, a cooled anger could be seen. If the youth also wasn’t blind, he would be able to see it. He laughed as if it was ridiculous.

“So, are you telling me to apologize?”

“If you did wrong, you have to. My parents taught me like that, but it seems like yours didn’t.”

“.....Just where do you get that confidence from? Are you going to get ahold of yourself only after you get beaten by me?”

The man talked like that and soon looked at the cameramen and staff that were a bit far away from them. He could vaguely realize that it was some kind of broadcasting. Although he didn’t know what kind of broadcast it was, he couldn’t ignore it at all. As there were also many cameramen around, there was a high possibility for him to get arrested if he swung his fist thoughtlessly without even being able to talk back.

But he didn’t want to lower his tail because of his pride. While thinking like that the man grabbed Jo Minjoon’s collar. But Jo Minjoon didn’t look dispirited at all. Jo Minjoon lowered his eyes as if he was disdaining him and glared.

“Shame? Shame would be shutting my mouth and not saying anything to you. If i don’t say anything now, who will open their mouth for me when I get caught up with a jerk like you?”

“Don’t talk as you please. When I can still endure it.”

“But why are you doing so right now? Before, you bent your anger on a fine meat. You may be able to endure it or not, but that person couldn’t say anything. What do you think is the reason? Because he’s really not confident on his dish? Because he really used a weird dish? No. The meat was fine. And the cooking was also well done. But that person couldn’t say anything. Because you

are his customer. A chef can't get angry on his customer. But. Are you really a customer?"

Jo Minjoon's eyes became fierce. The man was really speechless. Normally, looking at his body even if you said the same words you would refine it a bit, but Jo Minjoon was charging at him right as if his family was the one that got bad mouthed.

Only then did the man realize that the atmosphere was turning to a bad direction. Just because he was big and had some trained muscles it wasn't that he could control the flow. But rather, the strength right now was holding it the asian youth that was standing in front of him. Real strength was the silent cheering of the surrounding people, and the lens that were at the sides.

Isn't that person Jo Minjoon?

Ah, the one that came on Grand Chef?

The words that came out from the words of some tourists was the decisive blow. Precisely speaking, he didn't know what program it was, but it was certain that he was quite a famous person. He was an adversary he wouldn't get anything good while confronting him like this.

In the end, the man let go of Jo Minjoon's collar. He could only do so. Jo Minjoon spread the crumbled clothe with his hands and opened his mouth.

"I will give you an opportunity."

"Opportunity?"

"The opportunity to apologize to this person. Or."

Jo Minjoon raised his finger. The long finger pointed at the strong clenched fist that was like a cannon ball. A chilly voice was heard.

"Hit me. However you want."

Chapter 124: The Envelope That Embraces The Street Stall (3)

It was obvious but there was no way the man hit him. But of course, even if that was the case it wasn't that he had apologized. He mumbled something by himself and disappeared on the crowd. Jo Minjoon sighed. Normally, he wouldn't butt in like this, but he couldn't forgive people that blamed a fine dish at all. It was something that shouldn't be done. Because he was a chef.

“.....I do understand you but it was too reckless.”

Emily talked like that. Jo Minjoon said with a relieved voice.

“I know. I really thought I would get hit.”

“If that man was even a bit more stupid you would have. What if you hurt your hand like that?”

“I will reflect on it.”

And like that, a conversation was held between the two. The owner of the store which the man picked a fight with approached them and gave them two chicken kochis. He smiled with a wrinkled face.

“Thank you. This present.”

Jo Minjoon received the kochi. And the other one went to Emily's hand. Maybe it was because of the short english of the store owner, but he didn't say anymore and returned. Jo Minjoon smirked and said.

“Even so, we earned some kochis. Discussing for five minutes and earning 2 kochis seems quite the business.”

Emily smiled as if she was out of words and took a bite on the kochi. And soon, frowned.

“It's fine. He made that scandal with this?”

“How is it? Do you still think that I butted in for nothing?”

“.....half and half.”

It was when she talked like that and almost ate all the kochi. The PD approached and gave them two notes. It seems like they had also calculated the two kochis they ate. Emily asked in a calm voice.

“What were the hints until now?”

“Sea. Building. Somewhere we know. These three. And we have one more now. On my note there is a ‘expensive’ written. How about you, Emily?”

“Mine says peak..... Ah!”

Emily exclaimed. Jo Minjoon didn’t, but it seemed like he also knew where the hint was directing to. He opened his mouth and yelled.

“Penthouse!”

“I was thinking the same thing!”

The only place that was expensive, a building situated on the sea and on the peak. There was only the penthouse Martin had talked about. Emily grabbed her head and said.

“Ugh. Even since it said that it was somewhere we knew I should have realized. How many places do I know in Thailand?”

“How should we go? It should be by taxi, right?”

“I would like to go with a rickshaw, but we are too short on time to chase romanticism. Anderson’s team wouldn’t have found it, right?”

“We don’t know. Let’s go quickly.”

Jo Minjoon urged Emily with a hurried face. They didn’t know what was this for him to be acting like this, but regardless of the penthouse, he felt a sense of competition. Looking at him that

vaguely seemed like a kid, Emily thought.

‘He is indeed young.’

To be able to put passion in even small things like that. If Jo Minjoon heard it, it was something he wouldn’t like, but she thought that he was cute.

As they drove with the taxi for quite a distance, they could see the residential complex apartment. They got fed up of that height and width, and as they got in the hall Emily opened her mouth.

“As I know this penthouse hasn’t been sold for almost 6 years. Because it’s too expensive.”

“Then who has it right now?”

“The royal family.”

“Wow, It seems like they are really rich.”

“It’s true that they have a lot of money, but in the first place it isn’t that they bought it. As it didn’t sell, let’s offer this building to the royal family and raise it more luxuriously. They calculated like that. Think about it. If the people upstairs, no, if the king of this country was living in the same apartment as you. No, even if he wasn’t living but you were still in their house, wouldn’t you feel proud?”

It was a convincing story. Jo Minjoon, that was listening calmly, opened his eyes with doubts.

“Wait. Then the royalty provided us with a lodging?”

“That’s why I got surprised. Actually, I did hear that when national guests came, they lent it to them, but it was difficult to get in here when I last came here. Certainly.....”

“Certainly what?”

“Wouldn’t it be because of Rachel? I wouldn’t know about young people, but at least 10 years ago Rachel Rose was really a living legend. Precisely speaking, it was from when she ran Rose Island

with her husband.”

Every time he heard this he got curious. Just how amazing was Rachel’s husband? Even if he searched in the internet not many things appeared, maybe because it was before it got more active. Only information about epicureans reflecting on him all the time was all he could find.

As they got in the elevator, as there were many floors, there were also many buttons. When they placed the highest ‘83’rd floor Emily smiled brightly.

“I would be able to erase one thing from my bucket lists.”

“Is this place that amazing?”

“The most expensive things in the world can’t always be obtained with money. The penthouse we are right now is just like that.”

“We should express our thanks to Rachel.”

“You should know how precious the treasure you have is. Minjoon. Rachel’s interest can’t be obtained solely with effort.”

“I know. Sometimes I get stomach aches because the expectation is too big.....I will have to see it off. That expectation. For her, and for me.”

“Is it because it’s in front of the camera? That line feels quite tickly.”

“Is it that noticeable?”

Jo Minjoon smiled teasingly. The elevator stopped. The door that got plated in gold opened and what was seen next was a room with a cozy atmosphere. A room that only had a door and the elevator between. It felt like one kind of elevator. The moment the cameramen and the PD entered together to the room, the door opened abruptly and Martin appeared.

“Congratulations! Emily, Minjoon. You got the answer.”

“We are the first, right? Huh?”

Emily asked in a careful voice. Jo Minjoon just laughed at that look. Once, she was a judge that teased the participants but now she was the same as him that only stared at Martin's mouth. Martin didn't reply and pointed at the door.

"Go inside."

"Ey. Why are you like this again? Acting all scary. We won, right?"

Martin replied with a smile. In the end Emily and Jo Minjoon got inside and it was at that moment. Their mouths opened up naturally. There was nothing to say about the width, and the ceiling was also really high.

On the marbled floor, there were white furnitures placed, and through the glass that was placed instead of walls, you could clearly see Pattaya's scenery. Below the buildings lit with yellow and white lights, the lights of the cars were moving slowly like a swarm of bees.

This is why they wondered why the penthouse was the symbol for romanticism. It was when Jo Minjoon was slowly getting drunk under those flowing lights. An old voice and without weight was heard.

"Huhu, it seems like that old hag Rachel was late."

Jo Minjoon turned his body. And as he did so, after he saw an old man he was about to unconsciously bent down and stopped. Could he be in his seventies. Originally, he would show a courteous attitude, but this wasn't Korea.

"Uh.....Are you perhaps the new person?"

"Right. And you will be that famous Jo Minjoon?"

"Ah, yes."

"I'm Jeremy Bennett. I'm an epicurean. It seems like it's the first time meeting the one next to you."

“Ah, it’s Emily Potter. I did hear some things about you. But are you perhaps..... The one they say is my friend?”

Doubt appeared on Emily’s eyes. She did hear the name Jeremy Bennett, but she couldn’t say that she was acquaintanced to him. Jeremy slowly shook his head and said.

“No. Your lady friend was here until now.....Did she go to the bathroom?”

“Lady? She’s a woman?”

“Yes. And quite a young one.”

Emily put an even more confused face. There were no more people that she could guess. But at that moment, a door from a side opened with a click and sounds of the high heel was heard. At that moment, the heads of the three of them turned side by side. And at that instant, Jo Minjoon got surprised. It wasn’t because of her clothes which the part of the chest was deep. It was because of the feeling.

‘She feels like Kaya.’

It wasn’t that she looked like her. Compared to her she looked less fierce, and she was a woman that gave a strong feeling she was from South America. If he were to say the things that resembled her it would only be her black hair and the blue eyes. But the dangerous and harsh charm that emanated from her body made him think of Kaya.

In the other side, Emily was feeling a completely different thing than Jo Minjoon. Astonishment. And it wasn’t a good one. She said as if she couldn’t believe it at all.

“Sera.....?! How come you are here?”

“I came as an epicurean. It’s been a while, Emily.”

“You are an epicurean? Since when?”

“I wonder. Has it been a year? I’m quite famous nowadays. As the

sexiest epicurean in america.”

The woman called Sera replied comfortably and approached Jo Minjoon. And then extended her hand.

“It’s the first time seeing you. I’m Sera Keich.”

“Ah, it’s Jo Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon grabbed her hands. Sera put a charming smile that would enchant most men and said.

“I wanted to see you at least once. You know that nowadays, you are quite famous?”

“Really?”

“Yeah. You also have the absolute sense of taste, but personally i’m a fan of your cooking style. Grand Chef, I saw it well.”

“I feel thankful as you only say good words.”

The first impression of the new participants wasn’t bad. But although the relationship between Sera and Emily seemed kind of delicate, compared to the word that they were friends.

And that was the same for Rachel, that came in after 30 minutes. The moment she saw Jeremy, she suddenly frowned.

“You were still alive?”

“Why would I die if not even Rachel Rose did? I have to stay alive until my niece meets his own niece.”

While they were conversing like that, Anderson was on a side of the room breathing shortly and slowly with a pale face. Looking at Rachel’s age she couldn’t eat much..... And all the hints were vague things. As it became like that, Anderson had to eat it all.

“.....Are you okay?”

“Don’t talk to..... Ughh.”

Even after that, Anderson went quite few more times to the toilet. If there was one thing that comforted him was that Martin

had prepared a gift for them. But it wasn't anything special. It was that Emily and Jo Minjoon would obviously be able to stay in the penthouse along with Anderson and Rachel.

But it didn't seem like a moments mercy. It seemed like he was planning to do so from the start. If Rachel didn't stay, it could turn out that they were ignoring the consideration of the king.

That day, could it be that he couldn't get accustomed to the luxurious mat and blanket? Even before dawn ended, Jo Minjoon had to open his eyes. Funnily, what he thought that moment was cooking. As soon as he opened his eyes, he remembered the various colored dishes the thailandese store owners showed, and he couldn't hold it.

And as he went and opened the fridge while thinking perhaps, fortunately, there were ingredients. He couldn't know if the staff had prepared it, or it was already there due to the manager of the penthouse. The important thing was that he could cook.

There were exactly four kind of dishes that he ate on the stores. Banana loti, chicken barbecue, pad thai made by frying shrimp and noodles, and cow galbi boiled down in soy. But the cooking scenes he saw while passing by weren't only four. Tom yum with a clear soup, phat kai paomu 팟카파오무 (Not sure about this) fried with basil and pork. Mango glutinous rice with condensed milk and mango placed on it.

But of course he could only know the ingredients if he didn't put it on his mouth, he couldn't get to know the recipe. At least it was like that with the strength of the recipe. But just because of that, it wasn't that he could keep watching the cooking process. Jo Minjoon looked at many dishes, and he was confident on making those his own.

It wasn't that there were all kinds of ingredients in the fridge, Cow, pork, chicken, duck, crab, shrimp, and basic vegetables. And some fruits. Jo Minjoon slightly checked his system window.

[Comprehension on Thai cooking] – Proficiency 13%

Your overall comprehension on Thai cooking increases.

The probabilities of failing a dish when making a Thai dish lowers.

You can make a piece that's higher than your cooking level with a low probability.

It wasn't that high of proficiency. Looking at it through all the experiences he has had, it was difficult to make a good dish compared to a dish with low proficiency. Sushi made by a chef with several styles and with tens of years of experience, and a Japanese chef with three years of experience. If you were considerate the latter would be better.

Jo Minjoon raised his sleeve. There were some cameras installed on one side of the kitchen, but there was nobody here. That's why it felt rather good. Because he could completely concentrate.

First, he soaked the rice noodles in water, and Jo Minjoon started to recreate the many dishes he saw. The freshest thing was that he could use coconut oil instead of butter. Originally, he wouldn't even be able to touch it as it was expensive, but in Thailand, coconut oil wasn't that expensive.

It wasn't that he recreated the original recipe like it was. Because there was no need to. For example when even he made pad thai, on what he ate it had big peanuts placed on it. But this time, the peanuts were chopped small and even when he fried it he poured a bit of sangsom, which was a Thai alcohol, and flambeed it.

A smile appeared on Jo Minjoon's face. Some people may not be able to understand it, but he was happier when he cooked than when he ate. No, actually even when he ate his head was filled with 'how can I change this?' so it may feel more fun because of that.

It was when he was placing the dishes one by one on the table.

The voice of a man that still hadn't fully woken up was heard.

“What are you doing this early in the morning?”

“Ah, did you wake up because of me?”

“No. That's not it. If you age, you tend to sleep less. And the urinating habits weaken. Can I eat this?”

“Of course. I made it for you to eat it.”

Jeremy served a bit of the pad thai with an indistinct face. And it was at that moment when he poured a bit of red pepper sap and thai vinegar. Jo Minjoon looked at that with a surprised face. The cooking score that was a 6, raised to 7 in an instant. Jeremy ate a bite and trembled. Compared to before, he looked at Jo Minjoon with clear eyes.

“You covered the flavor of fire really well. On top of that it seems like you flambeed it.....”

“Ah, yes. I did it with sangsom. But the thing you did before.....”

“It's something not many know about. You have to sprinkle a bit of red pepper sap and thai vinegar for pad thai. If you don't do so, it's not that delicious.”

“I learned a good thing.”

Jo Minjoon said with a simply amazed face. Jeremy smirked.

“I just know how to eat deliciously.”

“Eating deliciously is the most difficult thing.”

“So cooking deliciously like you is easy? When I was young, I was also in charge of a restaurant. As a head chef. No, actually it was a small restaurant it would be funny to say that I was the head chef. It was a small place where a friend and I ran. People that acted like epicureans always said bad comments.....and well, just take this into account. Anyways, i'm not a chef anymore.”

As time flowed, the other people started to wake up and gather in

the kitchen. And they exclaimed at the dishes Jo Minjoon made. It was so because of his effort, but they could only express amazement at him copying exactly a dish he saw for the first time. To reproduce something he only saw and didn't eat, that wasn't only the problem of his sense of taste but the power of observation and concentration. Sera said.

“You really are a duplicating machine.”

“.....A duplicator?”

“A cooking duplicator. How about stealing all the menu in a chain store and make a new one with me?”

He just laughed at that groundless proposition, but even so he felt quite happy on listening the compliments by them. Jo Minjoon checked how the people gathered in the table ate. Unfortunately he didn't get an 8 point dish. Because he still hadn't properly understood about thai sauces. Looking at it like that, it may be obvious. It was fortunate that he had some 7 poitns dishes.

Rachel was tasting the dishes Jo Minjoon made one by one with a face more serious than ever. A fried rice with crab meat claw, soft shell crab which was fried it its whole body. She felt that every ingredient was being deployed in a good place.

She obviously felt a thailandese feeling, but what she felt above that was the colour of Minjoon being a chef. It seemed like he still hadn't realized it, but he certainly had a colour of his own. And that was the part that made Rachel the most expectant. Rachel put in coriander, crab meat, chicory and lime juice on a lettuce and ate a big bite. Jo Minjoon looked at that and smiled. She had the age of being a grandmother, but even so she eating his food like that was cute and joyful.

While Rachel was in the middle of chewing the food that filled her entire mouth Emily, that was eating fried kangkong, said with a bright face.

“As the kangkong is fresh it’s really delicious! And the flavor and aroma of the sap and garlic are also good.....How is it, Rachel? Eat this.”

Rachel gulped and said.

“There’s nothing in this table that isn’t not delicious. For a breakfast, it’s so big it makes me perplexed.”

“Thank you.”

Although the cooking score were between 6 and 7, even so it wasn’t that it wasn’t delicious. Rather, giving a straight flavor with a simple cooking process could be more delicious for normal people. But of course, although they were epicureans, they still felt fun with this simple flavor. Anderson, that saw Rachel eating deliciously, mumbled with a mortifying face.

“I also had to make breakfast.”

“You do it tomorrow.”

“Even so, I was already planning to.”

It was when they conversed like that. Martin appeared with a swelled face. And then said while smiling.

“Good morning. Maybe because it’s a good morning, there’s a good news. Should I explain it longly or shortly?”

“The short one is long.”

At Anderson’s answer, Martin opened his mouth for a moment and closed it. And then, said with a voice filled with amusement when watching the stifled faces of them.

“Good. Then let’s do so. The royal family has invited you to lunch!”

Chapter 125: In The Royal Palace (1)

“.....From where did they invite us now?”

“From the royal room.”

“When you say ‘royal palace’, you mean THE royal room, right? It’s not something else, right?”

Martin just smirked instead of replying. It was a question he didn’t even need to answer because Emily, who was asking the question, already knew it. She rolled her eyes between the fried eggs that was on her fork and Martin and in the end took a bite.

And then put a happy smile. From the oily and thick fried coating, the feeling of the soft white of the egg, and also inside of that the yolk that melted like sweet potato mousse was soft and lovely.

“Royal.....Ah, this fried egg is too delicious. Minjoon. Thank you. Anyway, why from the royal room? Maybe.....”

Emily glanced at Rachel. Jeremy smacked his lips.

“A rose is still a rose even after it withers. Looking that there are still people looking for it.”

“Do it properly. Badmouth me or praise me.”

“Originally, spicing things up like this is my specialty. I took 20 years on deciding whether to become a chef or an epicurean.”

“How capricious.”

“A capricious person looks for changes. So you can even say that the virtue of a chef is capricious.Thinking about it, I’m not a chef anymore.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon burst out of laughter, which he was holding in. Jeremy put on a smile as if he was proud.

“It seems like the Minjoon you want that much likes my jokes

quite well.”

“You are a funny person mister Jeremy.”

In the end, at the last words, Rachel lowered her head with a depressed face. Jeremy clicked his tongue.

“You thought you could easily get the heart of a young man at your age?”

“Jeremy. At least by thinking of our age, how about you get some dignity?”

“It’s funny for those words to come out of you. When I went to Rose Island back then and said that the flavor of the water was strange, what did you say? That if I cleaned off the dregs off my mouth, and cleaned the washed off the sickening smell clogged in my throat, only then would it taste better. Anyways, I don’t think that the protagonist of that story should be saying such things.”

“Just from when was that.....!”

“From when? It’s a story that hasn’t even been 20 years and it’s still clear for me. Oh, Minjoon. This mango glutinous rice is quite good. As it has condensed milk it’s even better. If you pour some brewed soy sauce I think that the aroma will get better.”

Jeremy teased Rachel with a relaxed attitude and even talked nonsense from start to end. Jo Minjoon looked at that and kept bursting out of laughter. Compared to the age his attitude was a bit light, but even so he didn’t dislike this man.

But to that Jo Minjoon, Sera whispered in a low voice.

“Don’t like him that much. Later on you will get wounded by him.”

“Me?”

“Jeremy Bennett is a famous person in the tasting world known as the one with the worst malicious remarks. If someone seems to be rising, the restaurants are on an emergency state just like if the

president had come.”

Listening to that, his playful and pleasant feeling was also seen differently. Anderson’s expressions caught his eye. He was looking at Jeremy with an uncomfortable expression. At first, he wondered if it was simply because he teased Jeremy but as more time passed he realized that that was not the case.

“Has Jeremy gone to your parent’s store?”

“.....You should know it, but my parents are quite the famous ones. If you were an epicurean working in the US and didn’t come to our restaurants, you would be two kind of people: an impostor or a liar.”

“Did he say something bad?”

“That’s the basic option. Back then, it was when I was working in the hall, serving, and not in the kitchen.....Ah, leave it. He’s really tenacious.”

If it was to the point that Anderson said that he was tenacious, how much would he be? Jo Minjoon tilted his head.

“Even so he isn’t saying anything at the meal I prepared.”

“It’s free. Where would a person be that said bad things to a dish he didn’t even pay. But if he has been charged with at least 1 dollar..... I will leave the last part to your imagination.”

I couldn’t imagine at all however much he heard that this old man that ate the pad thai with a smile from a really good person was actually a devil-like person. Sera asked with a voice filled with excitement.

“But if it’s the royal kingdom we will have to go to Bangkok?”

“Yes. It’s two hours by car.”

“It’s not as far as what I thought. But what do we do when we get there? Do we have some to protect some manners?”

“They don’t look for basic manners on foreigners.”

In the middle of that conversation the meal ended, and she came forwards saying that she was going to wash the dishes, not appropriate to her sexy and arrogant image. Emily seemed to be aware of that Emily, so she stood up in front of the sink and washed the dishes, but her hands were quite sloppy.

‘A woman that suits the rubber glove and a woman that doesn’t.’

It was a funny picture. Jo Minjoon looked at Sera’s window.

[Sera Keitch]

Cooking Level : 5

Baking Level : 6

Tasting Level : 8

Decoration Level : 5

It was amazing. She wasn’t even a chef or a wannabe, but she excelled in baking and cooking. Compared to Emily, her tasting level was one level lower, but looking at it with another point of view she was able to climb to that place at that young age. Sera’s age was 24. In Korea, she was still 25. She was only two years older than him.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“.....Do you have eyes on your back?”

“Oh, I just said it. You certainly were. See Emily? Men can’t take their eyes off a woman’s back washing the dishes.”

At the feeling he had been fooled, Jo Minjoon looked at the two of them with a perplexed face. Sera turned her head and then smiled brightly while looking at him.

“Right?”

“I can’t say I don’t like it.”

Jo Minjoon said that and smirked. It was a bad joke, but he didn’t feel that displeased. It wasn’t because Sera was a beauty, but

because of the charm she had. She had an ability to lead people on her pace without any rejection. Emily pouted.

“Uhh, whatever with the back. I still can’t get accustomed to this feeling. Why do you put rubber gloves? Isn’t it more comfortable to do it without them?”

“After you get eczema you will understand it.”

At Emily’s grumbling, Sera instead replied in a calm voice. Jo Minjoon didn’t hide his amazed feelings.

“It seems like you did it a lot of times. Such as washing dishes.”

“Why? You thought that I only grew up finely because I’m pretty?”

“Honestly you don’t look like you would grow by doing hard work.”

At the non-pretentious words Sera laughed.

“That’s true. I did grow up finely. But I liked cooking and at least I’m the type to clean up what I do. So I can naturally do the dishes myself. And you? Watching Grand Chef you didn’t give the feeling like learned elsewhere, did you practice at home alone?”

“Yes. I copied the recipes uploaded on the internet.”

“We are comrades. I also did it like that.”

“It seems like you are more interested in baking rather than cooking, am I right?”

“Huh? How did you know it?”

“My senses are a bit good.”

Jo Minjoon smirked and replied. There were more rooms to use the system in a fun way than what he had thought.

‘Will there also be more functions in cooking?’

He didn’t have the time to finish his pondering. The dishes got washed, and the staff provided them with a 6 person car. And of

course, they had to drive themselves. At first Jo Minjoon offered to grab the handle, but Anderson didn't get pushed off the driver's seat.

"Tell me if you are tired. I will drive."

"You should be tired because you cooked since dawn. Just shut up and take a nap."

"I'm not that sleepy....."

Even while he had said that, Jo Minjoon fell asleep not long after he sat in the seat. When he got a hold of himself Anderson was shaking his shoulder.

"Wake up. We arrived."

"Uh.....Huh? We arrived?"

"There's no need to put a sorry face. It wasn't that tiring. Let's go."

It wasn't that they had simply arrived at Bangkok. They were in front of the royal palace. Looking at the high fence that was right next to the car, Jo Minjoon exclaimed.

"Wow.....It really feels like the place where the king would live."

The palace seemed quite special and it was obviously magnificent. But the overall feeling was quite despaired. The roofs that gave off an Indian feeling and were over the European-like building. The golden roof tiles and the buddha statues were quite impressive.

As they passed over the tourists and got inside the palace, people dressed in black greeted them. There was no way they could now if they were security or simple palace employees. Anderson moved his feet with a stiffened face. No, it wasn't only Anderson. Excluding Rachel and Jeremy, everyone seemed nervous. Even Martin was gulping when he could from the back.

Jo Minjoon couldn't calm his beating heart. Rather than feeling

flustered of meeting the king, he kept smiling because of the soon to meet food. Palace food. And that wasn't a representation of a long time ago, but food that the actual king was eating would come. Even if it was an outstanding epicurean, it was something they wouldn't be able to experience easily.

They walked. They passed the hall, the passage, the elevator....and opened the door.

And the king was over there.

—

The Thai king was an old man that looked like a researcher and was the same as to what they saw in the posters. Their eyes that shone calmly seemed stubborn and daring. After they greeted each other and sat in front of the table, the king looked at Rachel quite a few times. On his eyes, yearning and regret that seemed to be looking at his long friend was filled. He opened his mouth. His English was as fluent as a native's.

"I do go to some Rose Islands branches. But even so I can't do anything about missing the atmosphere and the flavor of the main one."

"I'm sorry. Looking at that, I feel that I did something that shouldn't have been done to a regular customer."

"Aren't you planning on resurrecting the main store?"

"The reason why the main branch could be differentiated with the others was because of Daniel. The reason why I closed the main branch wasn't simply because of the shock of having lost my husband, but also because I knew the void my husband left.That's why I'm dreaming right now that before I leave this world to meet my husband, I want to resurrect that shadow in this world one more time."

Rachel's eyes hovered on top of Jo Minjoon for a moment and turned to look at the king again. And the king didn't miss that

motion. He asked with a gentle voice.

“And are you confident on being able to do so?”

“I did see some light. That’s why I got out of my house and came all the way here. If you first want to catch that light, you will have to first stand up regardless of where you want to go.”

“I hope that it becomes like that before I die. Recently, my health became dangerous. I want to feel that feeling again before I die.”

“Don’t say something weak. You know my past temperament. That the weaker you sound, rather than comforting I like to get angrier.”

“That’s right. I will have to slowly control my mouth if I don’t want to get punished.”

The king talked like that and then smiled towards the queen that was sitting next to him. The expression of the queen that was bad since he said something about dying, smiled faintly as if she couldn’t do anything about him.

It was at that moment that the dishes came. And everyone could only show perplexed looks. As it was the royalty they thought that a luxurious meal would obviously appear, but what was placed in front of them was only one dish. Precisely speaking, there was only one meal dish. In the middle of the table there were several things such as papaya, guava, various fruits, crepe-like desserts, and cakes placed. Only, they couldn’t see any other side dishes or main dishes.

The people hid their confusion and looked at the dishes. They thought that there would be some kind of reason they would be treated like this on the royal room.

The thing on the plate was quite familiar. Because of the aroma of the lemon grass and the red colour of it, at first he thought that it was going to be tom yum kum, but looking at it well he didn’t see any shrimps. For now, it was certainly a sort of tom yum. Because

on the tire of tom yum it held the meaning of ‘spicy and sour soup.’

But the thing that it contained wasn’t shrimp or chicken, but meatball. It was a really unfamiliar combination with tom yum and everyone got surprised at that point. However Jo Minjoon was focusing on another point. His eyes were wet in joy as if he had discovered a gem.

‘10 points!’

On a place he hadn’t expected at all an unexpected score popped. He guessed that the levels of the chefs would obviously be low as they worked in the palace, but he had never expected that they would be able to make a 10-point dish with tom yum. Because it was a dish that was like hot stew(매운탕) or Seolleongtang(설렁탕) in Korea.

“In Thailand you normally eat food along with side dishes, or also put many ingredients in a soup just like this. We pondered on how we should treat you when we invited you, but we thought that it would certainly be the best to serve you with the best dish in our palace. It would be good if it suited your tastes.”

He understood. It was a 10-point dish. There was no need to serve it with other dishes and mess that impression. And, all the happiness a person could feel was sent through his tongue in just this one dish. It wasn’t only because it was a 10-point dish, but because of the characteristics a thai dish basically had. Sweet, sour, salty, and spicy flavor. Especially for tom yum, it was the best dish in Thailand that could express those four flavors the best.

Jo Minjoon raised his spoon as if he was possessed. As he slowly put a meatball in his mouth, the meatball resisted for a moment and soon it crumbled like pudding. The juices and the broth that were in it flowed in an instant, and the flavor of the meatball was felt clearly. Shrimp, tofu, and probably pork fat. Maybe it was because it had pork fat, but the toughness of the meatball was more chewy and the contents were also massed together. It was a

flavor that you would feel moved even while only eating the meatball.

Below the dish, there were noodles hidden. The moment he ate that, he could also know that it wasn't a normal one. Because he could feel a familiar flavor inside of it. Jo Minjoon got amazed and said.

“This is Omyeon?” (A type of noodle)

“Yes. That's right. It's a secret weapon we make only for special guests.”

The king laughed softly and said. Omyeon. It was a noodle made with fish meat just like you would make fish paste. Obviously, he felt the aroma of fish every time he chewed, and when he ate the bean sprouts, mushrooms, radish, etc. he felt satisfaction as if he was eating food wrapped in lettuce.

The people didn't say anything for a long while and just concentrated on eating. They didn't want to pay attention to another thing that was not the dish. Only after they half-emptied the dish did Jeremy admire and say.

“It's really a flavor it reached it's peak. There are many cases with tom yum that they only focus on the stimulation and can't get the main center of it, but it's a flavor I can feel the long time.”

“It can only be like that. It's a recipe continued since my father. Actually, if you want to know the origins of this dish, I have to tell you the eating habits my father had since small. My father couldn't eat sea food well, and so my grandfather wished to fix that. He ordered to make the perfect dish that would fix this and.....the chefs of the palace pondered and investigated for months.”

“.....A dish made to fix his eating habit has this perfect of a flavor?”

“You can consider it like that, but you can also see it this way. A dish that you can only reach your hands to it even when it has

ingredients you don't like. But of course there was also the strategy to mash shrimp or fish meat and make it like a meatball, and the basics were delicious. As it was delicious, my father could also lessen the rejection he felt towards seafood. And after that, we reformed it time and time again for tens of years. We call this tom yum thai."

"Anyone that eats this won't be able to think that they dislike seafood."

Jo Minjoon talked like that and drank a spoonful of the soup. After that, he asked for permission, and he drank the soup while placing his mouth in it. It wasn't only Jo Minjoon that was like that, Emily, Anderson, and even Sera did it. The king looked at them with satisfied eyes as if he was looking at his nieces. It was then that Rachel opened her mouth carefully.

"We received really good treatment. That's why I want to return it back."

"Return it back?"

"But of course, it's only on the case when the situation allows it.....And if it is possible."

Rachel looked down at her hands. And soon said with a determined voice.

"I would like to treat you to dinner tonight."

Chapter 126: In The Royal Palace (2)

“For us, of course we can. No, even if we couldn’t we would make it so it becomes possible. How many people there are that really want to taste Rose Island, you know that real well. Rachel.”

The king said while smiling calmly. Rachel smiled brightly and turned to look at Martin. Martin didn’t even think about it and nodded fiercely. Rachel Rose that would be cooking for the king. Whatever you did for dinner it wouldn’t be as exceptional as this. He didn’t have any reason to stop her.

“Fortunately, it seems like our PD is also fine with it. Then, should we do it for tonight?”

“We are always ready. I will immediately tell it to the kitchen.”

“There’s no need to hurry that much. I don’t know who they would be, but there are these many desserts made with care. Let’s enjoy it a little.”

“Oh my....I was a bit too hurried.”

It was a scene that didn’t suit the king at all, that was picked as one of the calmest person by the media. But he could only be like that. Ten years of not having tasted Rachel Rose’s food passed like that. Precisely speaking, they were dishes made by her and her husband Daniel, but even if Daniel wasn’t here Rachel was a plentily amazing chef.

Anderson split the crepe that was below him and soon said with a careful voice.

“Teacher Rachel. May I help you?”

“Thank you Anderson. Always so gentle.”

Rachel looked at him as if he was admirable. Anderson put a smile on his cold face and then ate the crepe again as if nothing had happened. The crepe with tens of layers and the cream of the cake

was surprisingly soft and sweet. A feeling you were eating the sweetest and coldest meringue on your mouth. He couldn't know if that was simply because of the skill of the chef or because of Rachel's compliments. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"I will also help."

"Me too."

Sera quickly said after Jo Minjoon. As the situation turned like this, it became an atmosphere where Jeremy and Emily couldn't stay still. Jeremy cleared his throat and said.

"Huh my, I didn't think I would return to the kitchen."

"I didn't tell you to help me though?"

"Acting that way again. Rachel. Even if you don't like me at all remember this. We are broadcasting right now."

"I know. That's why i'm saying such pretty words."

"So pretty."

Jeremy smiled and shook his head. He didn't want to argue anymore. He didn't have the leisure to think about anything else other than being drunk by the after taste of the 'tom yum thai'.

Emily hesitated for a moment and then looked at Rachel with an awkward face.

"I really can't work well.....But should I help you?"

"Help is always thankful. Think as it as you are doing a wife class. It will be quite a funny experience."

"Wi-wife class? I still don't have anyone for that.....!"

"I wonder. As I heard nowadays.....ah, nothing."

Rachel looked at Emily with an ill-natured face and then shut her mouth because of the king. She asked to the king.

"Do you have a dish you want?"

“Actually, there’s a menu I longed for the past 10 years.”

“What is it?”

“I’m talking about the two-course menu you made me and my wife.”

“.....Ah, you were talking about that.”

She seemed to be searching in her memories and soon she nodded. She was also like that, but now her eyes were shining quite seriously. Jo Minjoon read the state window that appeared next to her.

[Rachel Rose]

Cooking Level : 9

Baking level : 8

Tasting Level : 9

Decoration Level : 10

‘.....She’s certainly amazing.’

However much he saw it, he always got amazed. Cooking level 9. When he first saw this he thought that it was obvious. And he wasn’t that surprised at the baking level 8. Because he thought that as she had age, she would also have the time invested in baking and had the time to polish it.

But for the tasting level to be 9, it was really surprising. She was on her sixties. Her tasting pores should already have been dead. But even so, to maintain the level 9.....It meant one of the two. That she controlled it well despite of her age, or that her tasting level was so high even those dead cells couldn’t do a thing. Perhaps, her cooking level could have been 10 at a time.

And the decoration level was also another thing. 10. Actually, this was the first time he had seen another person reaching level 10 aside of Kaya’s tasting level. Just how good is her handicraft? Even Anderson, who had a decoration level of 7, showed luxurious

pieces of art that made people get surprised several times. A kangaroo made with lemon, the back of a turtle made with olive. It wasn't just once or twice that he got amazed looking at it.

Just how luxurious things would Rachel be able to make. He could only expect. In the other side.....

[Jeremy Bennett]

Cooking Level : 6

Baking Level : 5

Tasting Level : 9

Decoration Level : 4

In the case of Jeremy, excluding tasting level, his levels weren't that high. He did say that he was a chef once, but as he himself said that he wasn't a skilled chef... Maybe it could also be because his skills rusted on the time he rested for a long time.

But of course, an epicurean only had to taste well. And his tasting level was 9. Taking into account that he was older than Rachel, the standard of his tasting would be incomparable to ordinary people. It was like that even with the tip he taught him this morning. He showed him a magic that was sprinkling thai vinegar and chili sap on pad thai to instantly make it have a cooking score of 7 when it was 6. There certainly were many points to learn from him.

‘I'm going to take it all.’

It was a trip for that. But of course, the fees that were given to him were also one of the other reasons. The biggest reason Jo Minjoon decided to travel with them was on these points to learn. And right now, the kitchen to work together with Rachel was in front of them.

He was hungry. And to satiate that hunger, his greed was quite deep.

“Ah, I ate really deliciously.”

Kitchen. Jo Minjoon thanked all the chefs in the kitchen with a polite attitude. But unfortunately they didn't know how to speak in English, and as they kept hearing “Aroi. Aroi.” that was ‘delicious.’ in Thai they said “Thank you.” and smiled.

While the chefs were leaving the kitchen for them, Jo Minjoon looked at the back of the leaving head chef. She, who became 50 this year didn't have a cooking level that high. 8. It could only be magnificent. It wasn't because she became the head chef of the palace kitchen with a cooking level of 8. The tom yum she made, looking at the attitude of the king it seemed like the quality was always like that.

But she had a cooking level of 8, how could she keep cooking a 10-point dish that stably? He couldn't do anything about thinking like that. But of course it would be possible for the recipe that was piled up for tens of years and she had the know hows.....Even so, it was magnificent.

‘If I have a perfectly made recipe and experience, would I be able to do it?’

It wouldn't be easy. The children that inherited a restaurant from their parents wouldn't take tens of years to recreate the same flavor. Probably, the chefs of the palace must have spent quite a long time to recreate only one tom yum Thai.

“We are going to make a two-meal course today. A starter and a main. Only two.”

“I was curious about that point. Why only a two-course?”

Emily asked with a curious face. Rachel replied calmly.

“When the king first came to our restaurant, he was quite exhausted on the culture of courses. He could only do so. In Thailand they don't spend that long of a time in a meal. That's why I thought I had to show a short and thick meal.”

“What kind of dish was it?”

“It’s simple. The starter was an avocado soup to relieve your nervousness. And the main.....Back galbi which external part was cooked once in the grill, and after that cooked with tom yum in a low fire, and on top of that I mixed steamed crab meat and starch..... I cover the back galbi with breadcrumbs and fry it again.”

“.....It’s really complicated.”

“It’s still not the end. We are going to mix apple cider and white wine on sugar and we are going to rest onion, cucumber, and cabbage. I’m going to peel the potatoes and fry it.....”

Rachel started to have fun talking and then she felt the gazes and said ashamed while holding her hands.

“I’m sorry. As I will stand in the kitchen in a long while I feel scared and also flustered.”

“We understand.”

“For now, shall we practice a bit? We have to raise the completion the most we can before it becomes night. Shall we start?”

The cooking started. As it was the kitchen of the palace, they didn’t lack any ingredients. Rachel didn’t rest for a moment and went here and there. She taught Sera how to stir the avocado soup next to her, and also talked to Jo Minjoon that was boiling the back galbi on the already made tom yum stock.

“Do you know why we aren’t resting the back galbi and boil it in a short time?”

“Mmm.....Is it because the aroma of the tom yum is too strong? To the point that even if we don’t ferment it for a long time, plenty of flavor comes out.”

“That’s also it, but it’s to make the meat a bit softer. But of

course, some people may prefer chewing the meat clearly, but our customers have a bit of age. Their teeth aren't as healthy as the young ones. That small consideration makes the big difference. For a chef it may be just another gentleness, but for the concerned person it becomes a warm feeling to the point they get teary. The difference between a first-and a third-rate chef isn't on the technique. It's on the heart about the customer."

Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon's eyes.

"In the end a chef exists for the sake of customers. A chef that isn't considerate on customers is just a person that cooks, and not a chef. Remember this. Between chefs that ignore customers, there is no one that lasted long. At least, the conclusion I got of my 60 years of life is like this."

"I will take that into account."

"I will be expecting it."

Rachel smiled softly. Anderson came after he separated the giant crab meat and mixed it with starch. Rachel nodded and said.

"Now cover it with the coating and fry it. I will handle the potatoes for a bit."

The giant crab meat stucked on top of the back galbi. He covered it with breadcrumbs again, and as it got inside the boiling oil, the bubbles that raised seemed just like lotus flowers. Jo Minjoon looked at that and thought. Lotus flower. Lotus. Kaya Lotus.

'.....It's a disease.'

It was when the back galbi got moderately fried. Rachel appeared. That moment, Jo Minjoon could only get shocked. The potatoes on Rachel's hand had various shapes. Some were eagles with spread wings, and others had the shape of tigers. The amazing thing was that in the case of the eagle each and every feather and in the case of the tiger every lines were clearly done. And it wasn't that she had taken long, but only some few minutes. Jo Minjoon

said with an absentminded voice as if he was possessed.

“Your decorating skills are outstanding.....”

“Honestly speaking, my husband cooked better than me.. And I didn’t want to get buried by him. I thought that if my husband was in charge of the flavor, I would be able to catch the attention with the eyes. As I practiced all my life while thinking like that, sculpting became easier than cooking.”

She was saying it calmly as if it was nothing, but how much would have taken to say those things lightly. A married couple. Lovers. That was the most important thing in the world, but they were also the ones they didn’t want to fall behind to. Feeling a sense of inferiority by the one you loved the most was a really horrible thing.

The potatoes started to get fried on the oil. When they were taking out the back galbi, Sera approached and brought apple cider, cabbage and cucumbers rested in white wine, onions, etc. It seemed like she saying that she liked cooking wasn’t a lie. If it were, it would be difficult to be showing a smile like that that was having that much fun.

“I already pickled it. What should I do now?”

“A moment. This pickle.....The aroma is a bit vague. Was the apple cider or the white wine stored in normal temperature?”

“Yes. I think so.”

“Ah, I’m sorry but you will have to do it again. Only if you rest it coldly will the true flavor be felt. You can do it again, right?”

“Of course. I will do it right now.”

Sera, that got sent back right in front of her, didn’t feel bad at all. She nodded and walked away a few steps. And then she turned back and said.

“But what do we do with this? Can I eat this?”

“Of course. But don’t fill your stomach. I will make you something more delicious.”

“Yes!”

Sera grabbed the pail that had the pickles with one hand and with the other hand she put a ‘fighting’ posture. Jo Minjoon smirked. She was a really energetic girl. Anderson opened his mouth.

“I’m taking it out.”

“Yeah, do so.”

The thongs raised up the back galbi. The crab meat and the back galbi that were in the dough got red on some parts which originally was transparent and white perhaps because of the tom yum. Then, Sera placed the rested pickles and Rachel placed the bok choy and fried potatoes. Jo Minjoon looked at the window that popped in front of him with a proud expression.

[Back galbi fried crab meat rested in tom yum sauce]

Freshness : 97%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 9/10

9 points. Although he hadn’t completely made it, and only participated in one thing, a 9-point dish appeared with only following Rachel’s orders. He felt just how important a head chef was. Bringing a dish of a completely different level even with the same cooks. He could kind of feel what kind of feeling that was only now. His eyes could only be buried in admiration. But Rachel ate a bite of the back galbi and shook her head. She said with a firm voice.

“Let’s do it again.”

Chapter 127: In The Royal Palace (3)

“Again.....?”

“Yes. Is there a problem?”

“No. That’s not it.....”

Jo Minjoon hesitated and then chewed on a back rib. After his body trembled he lightly sighed. It was so delicious to the point he got chills. The flavor of the tom yum that spread all over his mouth, the flavor of the crab meat, and the flavor of the back rib. There was nothing that lacked or fitted. Jo Minjoon’s brows gathered. He couldn’t understand at all just why this delicious dish was still lacking.

“It’s really delicious right now. To the point I wonder if this recipe can be improved further.”

“Those are right words, if we were normal people. But we are chefs.”

Rachel said with a voice that had determination. Just like the perfect truth as this that won’t change no matter what someone said.

“A chef has to surpass their own limits. I think that if it’s you, you will be able to understand.”

Jo Minjoon smacked his lips as if trying to say something, but didn’t. He remembered the risotto he made before. Pear risotto. The estimated cooking score was 6. But even in the process of cooking that, he didn’t miss the changes on the food and he concentrated. And what were the results? Wasn’t an 8-point recipe born?

Because of that he thought he understood what Rachel was trying to say. But that also had its limits. If it was a 9-point recipe it had everything it should, and it had plenty of skill and dedication put in it. Just how more could this change?

But of course, you wouldn't know if Rachel herself cooked. She would be able to catch the small parts others wouldn't be able to feel. But would that small part be able to bring an amazing change such as changing a 9-point dish to become 10 points?

Jeremy came while holding a small pot that had a bit of the avocado soup.

“Why don't you try this for now?”

“Ah, it's already done?”

Jo Minjoon brightened and approached to the soup. Jeremy poured a bit of the soup on Jo Minjoon's spoon with a ladle. He even licked the soup that fell in the hand he placed below the soup and nodded.

“It's delicious. I certainly like clean flavors such as this. But of course, there's some greasy feeling to say that it's completely clean.....But in the end that's the simple flavor of avocado.”

“Didn't you say last time that you liked food with strong aroma?”

“Flavor and aroma are different things. It's just like liking teas. Although the flavor is strong, it's tasteless. But even so it's not that I like tasteless things.”

At Emily's question Jo Minjoon replied calmly. The score of the avocado soup from back then was 8. But that was also an amazing thing by itself. Because the ones that cooked it were Sera and Jeremy. They were people that had cooking levels of 5 and 6.

Actually, he thought that the one that really cooked was Rachel instead of them. It didn't stop as her leading as a head chef, but she was completely controlling it. If she could feel the overall situation in real time and tune to it, actually it didn't matter as to who grabbed the pan or the knife.

‘This is why she was a legend.’

Jo Minjoon's eyes looking at Rachel weren't normal. Anderson

looked at Jo Minjoon with eyes that were a bit wary and then hit him with his elbow.

“Why are you that absentminded?”

“No, teacher Rachel.....I just thought that she was amazing.”

“.....Since when did you call her as teacher?”

“I don’t know. It just turned like this.”

Anderson’s expression was weird. He did like that Rachel was being admired, but it felt like he didn’t like her to be stolen. Could it be said that he was the older brother being wary of his younger brother of fear for their mother to be taken by him?

In the other hand, Rachel’s expression wasn’t that leisure. She looked at the back ribs placed in the plate. That face was just like that of a mother looking at her spoiled child. She had an expression of being guilty for not having perfectly done her job.

‘Daniel. What did I miss right now?’

It felt like his voice would be heard at any moment, but his voice and breath wasn’t heard. At that moment Rachel realized in a really long while that she had stepped to the kitchen again. And she remembered the grudge and the fear of having gotten in the kitchen in a really long while.

She felt stifled to the point she found it difficult to breathe. She remembered the scenery of that day. California, a summer of Venice’s beach. The sizzling and burning sand grains, and the disciples that were also sweating inside the kitchen. And the look of her collapsed husband.

“Rachel? Are you okay?”

As she got a hold of herself, she saw that Emily was looking at her with a worried face. Rachel looked back at Emily with an absent minded expression, and then got surprised and shook her head.

“Ah, I was a bit absentminded.”

“You don’t look good.....Aren’t you overdoing it yourself?”

“A chef is in the kitchen, what would be overdoing it?”

“Even so, you rested for 10 years already.”

“That’s why I can’t do it anymore. I already rested what I had to.”

Rachel replied stubbornly and replied as if she was fine. Emily said as if she couldn’t get calm at all.

“Even so, don’t do it without being that relaxed. You still have a lot of time.”

“Yes. I know. Not leisure.....”

Rachel’s mouth stopped. She looked at the cask that had the back ribs with an absentminded face and soon smiled brightly.

“Right. Relaxed. I didn’t have relaxation.”

“Yes?”

“Anderson, Minjoon. I’m sorry. I made a big mistake. Don’t cover the boiled back rib immediately with the dough and take it out with the thongs and wait a moment.”

“Understood.”

Jo Minjoon immediately took out one piece of back rib. As he was just looking at it without doing anything, he felt itchy. Could you say that he was feeling that he had to do something quickly? But Rachel didn’t give him any signs. The water on the back rib had mostly fallen down.

It wasn’t to the point that the water disappeared, but when the meat cooled down that Rachel opened her mouth. “Now cover it with the dough and fry it.” Anderson hurriedly gave him the dough he made. Crab meat starch dough and bread crumbs covered the back rib, and it fell on the boiling oil.

‘Will it change?’

Jo Minjoon looked at the fried coating that was getting yellow while feeling half doubt and half expectation. Jeremy at an already made back rib next to them and said.

“It’s plentifully delicious. It can get even more delicious here on?”

“Wait for it. A flavor beyond your imaginations will appear.”

Rachel said with a confident face. Jeremy looked at the avocado soup and the back rib fry alternately. Rachel frowned and said.

“No. Never thought about messing with food.”

“.....Do you even know what I’m going to do?”

“Right now you.....Ugh.”

In the end he stucked the back rib on the green soup. Jeremy ate a diet with a cocky face and soon frowned and pinched his chin as if he ate something he shouldn’t have. Rachel sighed and said.

“Bear in mind the advices of a chef.”

“I will take it into account.”

The combination of the two seemed to be quite shocking, and soon Jeremy nodded with a sulky face without talking back. It was then that the back rib got completely fried. Jo Minjoon raised the back rib and after he took off the oil he placed it on a plate. And then he looked at it with a surprised face. Sera, that was looking at that cautiously, said.

“The colour is a bit different from before?”

“.....Right.”

If the fried back rib of before had a colorful color overall, this fried back rib had an uniform colour. Just like before, Rachel placed the fried potato sculptures and the pickles and it was the moment she placed the vegetables with it.

[Fried back rib simmered in tom yum sauce]

Freshness : 97%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 10/10

[You experienced making a 10 points dish.]

[The mastery of the skill ‘comprehension of a head chef’ rose!]

[The mastery of the skill ‘standards of an assistant’ rose!]

[Cooking experience increases!]

Many windows popped up without control. But the number Jo Minjoon was concentrating on was only one. 10 points. Rather than having experienced making a 10-point dish for the first time he was more shocked on the point that that short time of waiting made such a big difference. Rachel calmly sliced the back rib. She put that on her mouth and trembled as if she was shuddering. It was perfect. She wanted to quickly show them this difference. She wanted to know how Jo Minjoon felt this difference. But at that moment, when she looked at Jo Minjoon’s face, Rachel even forgot her fidgeting and smirked.

“Why are you already putting that amazed face when you haven’t even eaten it? Here, eat it.”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t even reply and received the back rib with trembling hands. He slowly put it on his mouth. The first flavor was similar to before. The bread crumbs that stimulated the point of his lip melted even before it crumbled, and the moment his teeth broke down the crispy coating, the aroma of the crab meat spread calmly just like the aroma of a tea.

If when he ate the back rib before and felt the aroma of the tom yum as if it was exploding, this time it was only that it touched his tongue and ceiling softly. But that rather felt better. A dim and not blunt flavor. That flavor seduced him like a lady that dressed up purely.

Jo Minjoon chuckled. But even so, as he kept putting back ribs on his mouth, his face contorted as if he put on a teary face. Inside the reddened eye, his eyes were holding the back rib sunk in love and hatred.

It wasn't because it was delicious. But of course, it was delicious. It was so delicious he felt amazed and emotional. But what made him shudder were because of various thoughts, feelings, and the intersection of his memories. He thought that it was far, that it was the end of this dish, and a perfect one. But even so, although he did follow Rachel's orders, he made it with his hands, a flawless dish.

Most of all, what made him feel amazed the most was the power of time. Just how big of a difference could waiting, that small moment bring.....He felt it to be too beautiful. The profoundness of the dish itself moved him. And at the same time he felt angry. Because it felt that it was right in front of his eyes. The end dish was born by his hands, but it wasn't his. That made him really angry.

No one looked at him weirdly. Rather, thinking about Jo Minjoon's absolute sense of taste, they looked this reaction as one characteristical to geniuses. Martin smirked. When scenes such as this was taken, depending on how he produced it he would be able to give a more explosive emotion and shudder. And that amount of production, he was confident on being able to do it.

'It certainly was the right choice to bring him.'

He still hadn't showed his sense of taste properly in this program. But there would be one day that he spreads his wings completely. And Martin wasn't thinking of missing that moment.

—

The dish got completed. The simple two course, but the best dishes, was placed in front of the thai king and her wife.....and while eating, the king exclaimed deeply and wet in grief. At the

end of the meal, he said with a voice swirling with many emotions.

“It was a yearning meal. And from now, I think I will keep yearning for it.”

“It won’t be long. I will certainly revive those memories. I promise.”

The king grabbed Rachel’s hand and kept thanking her several times. The cameramen recorded that. Everyone felt the strength of the chef called Rachel. Because she made that kind of dish with the hands of others, and not her own, she felt even more amazing.

It became time to leave the palace. Inside the car, Jo Minjoon, who was looking at the night scenery, silently opened his mouth.

“Teacher Rachel. Are you sleeping?”

“No. Do you have something to tell me?”

“It was really vague as to what kind of objective should I have as a chef. Will delicious dishes be enough? But on what standards is that deliciousness? It’s because of those thoughts.”

“So.....?”

“I want to take you as my objective. I want to become..... A chef that makes things lightly even if it seems difficult and impossible.”

Compared to before, it was certainly a voice that sank down clearly, but his ambition and desires were twitching in it. Rachel looked at that Jo Minjoon with a smile. The greed related to cooking, the more excessive it was the bigger the strength would become. She replied.

“That determination, I will cheer for you. But there’s something you are misunderstanding.”

“Misunderstanding?”

Rachel said.

“For me cooking is still heavy and difficult. Even if I have

experience and get more skilled.....”

The woman that got old by the time, held her life on her mouth.

“It doesn’t get lighter.”

Chapter 128: Florencia's Dawn (1)

Doing something with a good will didn't always show good results. And like that, the dish Rachel made for the king with all her power brought an unexpected bad.....no, a little weird situation.

Jeremy was right like that. Could his satisfaction because of Rachel's back rib have been instantly raised? He spat out bad comments on every restaurant he went.

"You just seeped in the smell and the flavor can't even be felt properly. I told you to cook but you are doing fraud."

As he was an epicurean, he could do that much of an evaluation. But what made the situation complicated wasn't that he was talking by himself, but that he was saying those things to the chef himself. Even so, if it was on English he would be able to understand..... But he searched on a thai dictionary and complained really earnestly.

Could the grudges of those people reach the heaven? The day before they were supposed to leave Thailand, a sound of the clouds tearing was heard and soon rain fell as if it was exploding. In the end, the flight got extended, and the staff and the participants all had to stay in the waiting room of the airport.

While sitting on a not that comfortable chair, Jo Minjoon organized the dishes he ate while he was in Thailand on a palm sized note. And on that note, it didn't simply had the things he ate in Thailand. Dishes he ate on Brazil, and even when he was at Grand Chef, the recipes and tips and the characteristics of dishes by countries were written.

For example in India, there was a thing like the preferred spices when cooking dishes with fruit and chilli, and excluding the ones that had dairy products. How perplexed was he when he first heard that. Fruits and chilli. It wasn't a combination to be easily

imagined because of his culture.

Sera, who glanced at Jo Minjoon's note, expressed amazement.

"You are really meticulous."

"I decided to become a chef. There's only one path I have to walk, so I need to at least do it well."

".....A man that works hard, how cool. Minjoon. Keep maintaining that posture. You look really sexy."

"Is that sexual abuse?"

"What a woman as charming as me does isn't abuse, but seduction."

Sera talked like that and flew a kiss on the air. It was at that moment she thought that Jo Minjoon lowering his head was quite cute. Emily pulled Sera and then sighed.

"Don't bother an innocent person."

"Lecturing me again, I'm not a kid anymore."

Jo Minjoon just looked at the two of them. There was one thing he realized while being with them, and that was that Sera was quite aware of Emily. At first it seemed that Emily lost some pace because of the blunt character, but after a while it rather felt that Emily was taking care of her spoiled niece..... Sera was strange. Could you say that she was a little sister admiring her older sister and acting that she wasn't? And actually the difference of ages was like that. Sera was 24. Emily was 31.

"Hey, look at this."

Anderson called Jo Minjoon. His finger was pointing his cellphone. Jo Minjoon, that extended his head, soon smirked.

"It looks like she is doing well."

It was Chloe's picture. She was wearing a chicken costume, and was cooking for children. As she went to a 5-minute recipe

broadcast constantly, it seemed that she was also being called from other places. It was also because there were children, but looking at her face that was blooming with a smile he felt good. Anderson, that wasn't only showing pictures of Chloe but on Marco, Hugo, etc. opened his mouth.

“Aren't you thinking of starting Starbook?”

“I have never thought of it.”

“You don't lose anything by using it. It's also important for chefs to improve their image.”

“.....I thought that you were going to be quite reserved on these things, you are quite open minded.”

“I'm realistic. If it's helpful I'll do it. Rather than eating something without knowing who I am, it would be more delicious to be expecting me. Then, is there a reason not to do it?”

“If you tell me to find a reason, it's not that it doesn't exist. You know that. Things like blind test. Simply evaluation without looking at the exterior of the dish.”

“That's a method used in competitions. In the end, the image of the chef is also put in the dish. Before the food touches your tongue, raising your expectation isn't only the aroma and the appearance.”

“I understand what you are trying to say. In the end, you are telling me to start Starbook, right?” (PR: So it was at this point that I realized that it's like Facebook. Sorry I'm slow.)

Anderson touched the screen. Many familiar faces appeared.

“Look. Kaya is also using it. Although she's not the type to upload many things frequently, look. She already has ten thousand fans.”

“And how many do you have?”

“.....Uh, I started recently.”

“So how many do you have?”

At Jo Minjoon's stubborn question, Anderson smacked his lips for a moment as if he was perplexed and then lowered his head with a sulky expression.

"Two thousand seven hundred."

"Oh, that's a lot. But why are you putting that dispirited face?"

"It's not a lot. Compared to the others, it's so so. Even Chloe passed six thousand people."

"You said you started recently."

".....Actually I was the first to start after the competition ended."

At the attitude of confessing an important secret, Jo Minjoon couldn't hold his laughter anymore. Anderson frowned.

"What is so funny?"

"Kuhu.....It is. For the unparalleled Anderson to be suffering with these things."

"I'm not."

Anderson snorted as if was spouting nonsense. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and said.

"One day, you will naturally pile them up. What will happen if teacher Rachel joins Starbook? How many tens of thousands..... No, won't it be possible to get some hundreds of thousands?"

"I wonder. She is indeed famous, but she also has her age. The fans of teacher don't have the age to be looking for famous people on Starbook....."

"You are a fan but are young."

"There aren't many like me."

"Now that I see, why are you following teacher like that? No, I know she's someone you can only follow.....Perhaps, did you go when you were small? To Rose Island's main branch."

"Yeah."

It was a short reply but Jo Minjoon's eyes shone even more brightly. He asked with eyes filled with curiousness.

“How was it?”

“It's impossible to tell me to express it with words. Even so, at an age that my tongue was sensitive.....It was shocking. I can't say more than that.”

His chest heaved just by imagining the restaurant. Maybe, 10-point menus would have been waiting in line on that restaurant. Just what kind of heaven could have been? Jo Minjoon regretted that he wasn't born earlier. If perhaps he had, he would certainly go there. And meet him. The husband of Rachel in his younger days. There were many things he wanted to ask, learn and feel from them.

But he still had an opportunity. Although he wasn't at his best, he still had Rachel next to him. He remembered the words Emily said to him. That getting the attention of Rachel is something most chefs can only dream of. And Jo Minjoon wasn't planning to let go of that chance.

Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel. His eyes, which was looking at the tired Rachel who was sleeping with her head tilted, wasn't normal. It was at that moment when Anderson glared at Jo Minjoon. Martin approached them.

“I got contacted just now. They say that the flight will be released in one hour.”

“Ah, we will be able to leave immediately?”

“Yes. If you have things to prepare before you leave, do it now. And if you want to go to the store you can also go.”

“Where are we going after Italy?”

“That's of course a secret. You will get the fun of expecting. You can guess.”

“Well. Actually, it’s too much just expecting for where we are going right now. Italy. Personally, I like Italy’s dishes from Europe the most.”

Jo Minjoon gulped down the gathered saliva. He had many things he was curious of. When he went to Italian restaurants in Korea, the cooking point was different for each chef, and he also wanted to know how an ideal al dente felt like.....And he also wanted to know how the flavor of an Italian meat would be, and the flavor of the sauce or purée made with Italian fruits was. Thinking that he would soon be able to experience it, his heart beat as if he was going to an excursion.

After everyone talked for a moment, it became silent. Some chose to sleep, and some looked at their cellphones. Jo Minjoon was the latter.

[Me : Are you busy?]

[Kaya : No. I’m going to the airport right now.]

Fortunately, it didn’t seem that they missed the time. As it was a message from quite a while, Jo Minjoon moved his fingers with a really excited face.

[Me : Can I call you?]

[Kaya : Yes.]

[Me : I will call you. Wait a moment.]

Jo Minjoon pressed the call button and brought his cellphone to his ear. As Anderson looked at him with a weird face, Jo Minjoon smirked and moved his mouth to say ‘Kaya’. Anderson turned his head after putting an astringent face.

The signal was long, perhaps because it was an international call, but soon a familiar voice was heard. Kaya opened her mouth. If perhaps what came out of her mouth was a dish, it would be good to express it as it was fermented with sleepiness and roughly cooked.

[I'm tired.]

“Why are you saying that since the start? Are you sleeping nowadays?”

As Jo Minjoon started the conversation, Martin sent an eye sign implying who it was. Next to him, Anderson opened his mouth instead. “He say’s it’s Kaya.” Martin sent an eye sign towards the cameramen and asked them to zoom in on Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon didn’t even know that situation and continued the call with a comfortable expression.

“No. It’s still not the time to sleep. How’s over there?”

[It’s dawn. Don’t tell me to sleep. How do you know when we will speak again?]

“What’s that important? Your body becoming bad is more of a problem.”

[This is a problem for me. I don’t know when was it since I had a conversation like conversation. The people I meet are always residents, customers, or other chefs. When I contact you and the others at times, I feel that I’m resting.]

“Who do you contact with aside of me?”

[It’s obvious. Mom, my sister, and.....Marco. Chloe and I couldn’t match our times that easily. So we send and receive messages once a day.]

“Chloe is also busy. So, is your body okay?”

[I don’t know. They don’t even send me to the hospital so how should I know? I don’t. When I get to know later on, I may have an incurable disease.]

Jo Minjoon frowned. He didn’t feel good even with imagining it.

“Don’t say that. So, where are you now?”

[Germany. But in a few hours I will be at Italy.]

“.....Italy? I’m also going there. Are you appearing on our broadcast?”

[No way. They say they are doing a Grand Chef broadcast on Italy, and they told me to show myself as the winner. Even though I don’t know any Italian.]

“Will we be able to meet?”

[If it’s near we will be able to. Escaping when it’s dawn.]

“It would be good if it’s near.”

The conversation between the two didn’t finish for a while. Ten minutes, thirty minutes, fifty minutes. Only after it became time for the plane to depart did Jo Minjoon finish the call.

“I soon have to get on the plane. At least get some rest on the plane.”

[Yeah. I will hang up.]

Only after he ended the call did he realize that the other people were all looking at him. He said with an awkward expression.

“Is there a problem?”

—

The flight time was a bit more than 12 hours, but because of the time zone difference, it was exactly 2pm when they arrived at Florencia. As they passed the immigration post and got outside, Martin cleared his throat and gathered everyone. Then he opened his mouth.

“This is Italy. And today, we brought a special guide that will lead you.”

“A special guide?”

Emily asked with a strange voice. At that moment Jo Minjoon thought up of Kaya. Kaya certainly said that she was coming to Italy. Although she said that she was going to Italy’s Grand

Chef.....Maybe? He thought of that.

Martin just looked back instead of replying. The man that was a bit farther away than him slowly walked towards them and took off his sunglass. At that instant, Emily gulped some air.

“Alan.....?!”

Chapter 129: Florencia's Dawn (2)

“It’s good to see you again.”

Alan said with a composed voice. He hugged Rachel and Emily for a moment, and then looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Minjoon. It seems you grew a bit?”

“No. Even if the soles of my shoes do grow, it won’t happen that I grew.”

Jo Minjoon laughed playfully and pointed his shoes. After Alan greeted Anderson, he looked at Jeremy and Sera.

“It’s been a while, Mister Jeremy. I’m holding the evaluations you left after you came to my restaurant deeply in my heart.”

“.....Uh, I don’t remember well, but did I compliment you?”

“I wonder. If I were to tell you some things I remember..... It would be that the apple rice cake I made for dessert was disgusting, and that other people made so many good comments to the point your stomach hurt that you would refrain from it. Well, it would be that.”

“Hoho, people nowadays don’t have the time. I don’t like looking at the same contents again.”

Jeremy laughed naturally and spoke. Perhaps he wasn’t thinking to talk back, but Alan smirked, turned away, and put a soft smile.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Alan Craig. Just call me Alan.”

“Ah, yes. I’m Sera Keitch. It’s good to see you like this. You are someone I wanted to meet one day.”

“Wait. Alan, you know Sera?”

“She came out as the model for the main page in the Cuckoos magazine as the sexiest epicurean in the world. Everyone that should know, knows about her.”

“.....But you aren’t the type to look at magazines.”

Alan evaded to answer and looked away. Jeremy smirked next to him.

“Even if you don’t see magazines, there are times you get to buy it. That’s why the strength of the cover is that great.”

“I understand what you are talking about.”

Sera smiled sexily like a model and looked at Emily. Emily moved her mouth sluggishly as if something was bothering her, but she didn’t say anything.

“But how did Alan come? Ah, is it because of teacher Rachel?”

“That’s the biggest reason. How can I not come when my teacher came.”

Alan put a smile that didn’t suit him and looked at Rachel. Rachel cleared her throat. Alan said with a serious voice.

“Thank you for returning, teacher. I wanted to see you standing in the kitchen again, teacher.”

“.....You didn’t learn long below me, but your feelings are the same as the others.”

Rachel said with a bit moved face. Alan was still in his middle thirties. When Rachel left the kitchen Alan was barely 24.....And obviously, he had only learnt for a few years below her. So she could only feel thankful of Alan’s feelings. Alan replied with a calm voice as if it was obvious.

“Just because it’s short it doesn’t mean it’s shallow.”

Soon, they got up on a van and went towards Florence. When they first arrived on the airport they thought that beautiful buildings of the time of Roma would greet them, but what was in front of them was only a plain and a wide road. Soon, Martin contacted them with a radio.(walkie-talkie?)

[Ah, ah. Can you hear me?]

“Yes. We can.”

[Right now it's vaguely the time to eat lunch or dinner. That's why I think that it would be fine to visit places until it becomes night. Alan. You know many good places, right?]

“I even know how many buildings there are on Florence. Don't worry.”

[How many are there?]

“20032.”

Silence flowed through the radio. Alan placed it down as if he had won. Anderson, that was focused on driving asked.

“How do you know that?”

“I just guessed.”

“.....You guessed?”

Emily asked with a surprised face. Alan shrugged his shoulders and said.

“I don't even know how many forks there are in my kitchen, how will I know the amount of buildings in Florence? Even so, Martin will be investigating right now. If I said it right, or if I just guessed.”

“.....You also like teasing people.”

“I'm not that vile of a person. I just like teasing Martin.”

“Why Martin?”

“Last time when he came to my restaurant, he vomited on the floor. Even when I told him to control himself with the alcohol.....”

Jo Minjoon burst out of laughter. And then he opened his mouth as if he was curious.

“Now that I see, are there also many jerk customers in your restaurant? At least, I don't think they will pick a fight with the

flavor.”

“Why won’t there be? Even when I was running teacher Rachel’s Rose Island that was in Venice, there was at least one jerk per day.”

“How were they?”

“I will answer that. There are people that spit on the dish and at times people that vomit at it.... And there are people that smoke on places that were VIP and were no smoking places, just because it was VIP. There were also some that skipped the bill, it was only once but there was someone that pretended to order something and left a dead cockroach on the dish.”

“.....The last one doesn’t seem to be a jerk, but someone that suffers of a mental disease.”

“The heart of people are like that. However much you hear that it’s delicious, that it was a good time..... After they experience it once the good energy they had piled up through the day disappears in an instant.”

Rachel pouted with a regretful face. Alan added.

“Anyways, as we are now functioning with reserves, at least those kind of terrorist became harder to see. But of course, in the case the restaurant isn’t popular to get filled up, it would be vulnerable for those kind of people. Actually, the reservation is difficult by itself. As there are people that just make the reservation and don’t appear, there are many cases where you are keeping a table and just throw off money. No show. You heard of it, right?”

“Ah, yes. I really can’t understand that. You just have to call once.”

“Even I can’t understand it. But the problem is that non understandable problems are too frequent. There are more restaurants you can think of that go bankrupt because of no show. That’s why there are places that don’t take reservations at all.”

“Anyway, since we are now operating through reservations, those kind of terrorist acts became harder to see.

Alan said as if he couldn't do anything about it and soon smirked and looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Why? Are you worried for when you get to run your own restaurant?”

“I know. I would be thinking of a future that's too far away.”

“No. That's a desirable look. But a problem you can't do a thing about it, just don't think. There's no need to stress yourself mentally.”

“I'm doing that. I feel flustered while thinking where to run my restaurant and things like that. Well, for now I will have to accumulate experience before thinking of that”

“If I got a place on my restaurant I would call you.....But honestly speaking, even as I see it it's not somewhere to come while learning Italian. There would be many places in the US, and in other places in the world welcoming you. Perhaps.....”

Alan glanced at Rachel.

“It may be on a closer place than you think.”

—

Florence, it was one of the countries that was less exposed to the war in Italy, and of course in Europe. When they saw the culture of the buildings and duomo(cathedral) from hundreds of years ago that survived, and the Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Jo Minjoon got moved more than when he saw the Thai palace. It was the first time he felt that buildings were pieces of art.

‘I want to open a restaurant on a place like that.’

“Let's decide where to go.”

Emily said with hungry eyes that could be seen at one glance. Just like her reins loosened in front of food, it was also obvious

that she got sharper in front of hunger. As you could clearly see that she wanted to run off to somewhere and shove in food, it was rather seen cuter. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I’m certainly curious about pasta.”

“Panini for me. Pizza is also good.”

“Anyways, you have plenty of time so you will be able to eat it all. But first, you will have to erase the burden. I recommend sandwich. There’s a really famous store over here.”

Alan opened his mouth. As he was a resident, the weight of his words could only be different. All the others nodded unconsciously.

“Let’s go then.”

The place Alan brought them to was a store that seemed like a truck and also a container. There were only three people in the kitchen taking the orders, and in front of them there was a menu written in italian. Alan read the menu.

“First, I will explain the most basic composition. You can only choose the bread for sandwiches. And you can also choose the meat and the sauce you will put in.”

“.....It’s similar to the sandwich stores there are in the US?”

“It’s similar, but the flavor can’t be compared at all. Trust me. Personally I recommend the lampredotto made with cow intestine.”

“Ah, wait a moment.”

Sera shone her eyes and then said something to the chef. In Jo Minjoon’s ears it was heard quite fluent, but he couldn’t actually know. Sera brought a panini after a while and lent it to Jo Minjoon and smiled.

“I have never seen your absolute sense of taste properly. Can you show it to me once?”

“.....You are really a child in unexpected areas.”

“What can I do? Actually, I have always been curious, but I couldn't ask you because I may seem ill-mannered. I think that we can start to ask these things now. Are we not that close?”

“Give it to me.”

“Ah, here.”

Sera looked at Jo Minjoon with throbbing eyes. It was a bit burdensome, but soon Jo Minjoon took a bite of the panini. There were no grill marks, and the bread was quite swelled up. Jo Minjoon liked this panini more. If it was pressed in the panini, the slightly burnt feeling and the taste becomes more abundant, but it was easier to feel the texture of the bread and the original hardness of the bread.

Jo Minjoon looked at the panini for a moment. Next to the panini, the system window was telling that it was 7 points. It was a good dish. Because it was at a similar level to what he normally made. Nowadays he became more picky as he hanged out more with Rachel, but even so it was plenty to eat it deliciously.

The moment it entered his mouth the system was showing him the ingredients, but Jo Minjoon didn't look at that. For now he wanted to guess until he could.

“.....First, there certainly is cow intestine. They fried onions and fresh basil in olive oil..... and they also put in garlic and peperoncino in it. Olives, simmered caper, rucula..... on the tomato sauce there's tomato, fresh cream, a clove of garlic..... Well, there's the things I already named put in it again. Also.....”

From now on it was the territory of the system. Jo Minjoon slightly turned his eyes and checked the things he wasn't certain about. And then said with a vivid voice.

“There's white wine and honey. I'm a bit surprised about the honey. It seems like it was mixed with the sauce later on.”

Two things. The things he couldn't guess were only two. Is it because of the continued training of eating by feeling the ingredients? As he put a proud smile, Sera looked at him with a speechless face.

“.....Right. I don't know the ingredients of the sauce, but you guessed the ingredients that are in it.”

“Honestly speaking, you can do it if you concentrate enough. You said you usually practiced feeling ingredients.”

“You know that it doesn't have any credibility coming from someone that has an absolute sense of taste, right? I couldn't do it however I tried.”

Sera pouted with a depressed face. Jo Minjoon felt rather strange. Sera's tasting level was 8 like him, and his tongue wasn't special at all. At least, that was what he thought. But he said Sera wasn't able to do what he could.

‘Does the system also make my tastes more sensitive? Or.....’

Originally he was sensitive, but he wasn't conscious of it. It was when he thought like that. Sera put on a face that she wasn't certain at all and then approached to the chef again and opened her mouth. An astounded expression appeared on the face of the chef for a moment, but after Sera's words, he looked at Jo Minjoon with an interesting expression.

And then he took out some ingredients and started to chop it. He did it to the point you wondered if he wasn't grinding it, and then smeared it on the bread. Jo Minjoon, that was looking at that at a distance, got astounded as if he was sick of it.

“You want to make me eat that?”

“Absolute sense of taste, I want to know how perfect it is.”

Sera's eyes shone. It could only be like that for her. For someone that had an absolute sense of taste to appear before an epicurean was no different than Beethoven appearing before a musician.

Even Emily, when she first knew that Jo Minjoon had an absolute sense of taste, approached him to make him an epicurean.

The newly made panini entered Jo Minjoon's mouth. Everyone was looking at Jo Minjoon with nervous looks. Gulp. His adam's apple moved and then.....

He opened his mouth.

Chapter 130: Florencia's Dawn (3)

“Carto (까르또). Shallot. Mini cabbage and beef flank.”

Jo Minjoon's mouths named the flavors without hesitation. Honestly, if you placed these ingredients in a ground state, the level of it could only be more difficult compared to the time of the pocket mission. However he couldn't show a weak side. People in the world were already recognized him as a chef with an absolute sense of taste. At least, his abilities to guess the ingredients were officially the best in the world, no, in history.

‘If what they want is this.....’

He could play this simple joke. Actually, what made him determined on feeling like this was the words Anderson told him at the airport. That had quite an influence. Starbook. Even if the image that piled up through that showed in your dish, he said that it was rather welcoming. Although it won't be completely winning by cooking, the real objective for a chef isn't victory, but making customers happy.

If he could increase the range in which he could please customers, he thought that that was rather a virtue of a chef. Honestly talking with common sense, when Jo Minjoon was naming the finely grounded ingredients that shouldn't be able to be felt, there wasn't even a trace of hesitation in Jo Minjoon's voice.

Everytime he got one ingredient right, everyone showed different emotions on their faces. Emily had a proud face that was like looking at her younger brother, and Alan nodded as if he knew that would happen.

Rachel looked at him with moved eyes like usual, and Anderson put a jealous face looking at that Rachel. And when interest appeared in Jeremy's eyes.....Sera was astonished. She crossed out all the ingredients that were written in a paper. There was nothing

wrong in it.

It was impossible. Even if he had an absolute sense of taste, and if he had more taste buds than normal people to the point it was incomparable.....Could you guess those finely ground ingredients like that?

Sera

“.....Impossible.”

Night. Looking at her reflected self, Sera mumbled. Emily, who was persuading at a distance, spoke with a puffed up voice.

“I told you, right? His tongue. We didn’t edit anything.”

“It’s not that I didn’t believe.....I didn’t know it would be to that point.”

“Actually, I was also surprised. Because the time of the dumpling and this time.....it’s on a completely different level.”

Honestly speaking, Emily was uneasy. She wondered if he would be able to guess all those ingredients that were ground up to be nearly a powder, even if the one they were talking about was Jo Minjoon. But of course, she thought that he would be able to do with what she had seen until now, even so she couldn’t help but feel even a little bit uneasy.

But today, Emily’s uneasiness disappeared. It was the day a nail was stuck about his absolute sense of taste. The fan’s of Jo Minjoon that support his absolute sense of taste would be able to defend it more because now they were filled with more confidence. Emily put down the hair dryer and looked at Sera. Her look, that was more dispirited than usual was rather cute, but she couldn’t leave her alone.

“Are you depressed because you think you became a supporting actor?”

“.....I don’t know. At first I was flustered, but as today I saw him

guessing all of the ingredients right with my own eyes.....I don't know. Should I say that I'm an extra musician looking at Beethoven? Emily, how did you hold it down? This sense of inferiority."

"Because it's a problem you don't need to feel that."

"Why?"

"There are people that say that Beethoven is great, but not everyone says that he's the best. And it's not because he's lacking. Because in this world, it would be meaningless to name someone as the best."

"Even so..... Thinking that I will always end up as a supporting actor, an extra....It's a bit sad."

At Sera's uneasy face, Emily smirked. Emily put lotion on her hands and smeared it on Sera's nose. She frowned.

"What are you doing?"

"There's already an answer on what you asked. Actually, the ones that are called as the most outstanding geniuses in the world of music are the ones that specialize in classic music. But, do you listen to classic music?"

".....I'm not the type to listen to it much."

"It's like that. It's true that Minjoon's tongue is so sensitive to the point he's claimed to have an absolute sense of taste and is a genius, but just because of that the things the tongue feels and the flavors aren't always the absolute standard. Because preferences are various. You just have to show off your colour."

'My colour is sexy epicurean.' Sera was thinking like that and then spread the lotion she had on her nose and looked at Emily with calm eyes. Emily smiled jokingly.

"That lotion is expensive. Use it well."

".....You really are detestable."

“Is that something you should say to someone that solves your thoughts?”

“That’s why you are all the more detestable. You look cool for nothing.”

Sera said that slightly and then touched her face as if she hadn’t said nothing. Rachel, that was looking at the two of them, smiled brightly.

“You really are close.”

“.....There was once that I said that to Anderson and Kaya. I think I now understand how the two felt.”

Emily said with an indisposed voice. Sera asked.

“Now that I see, that person called Kaya also seemed amazing. How is she?”

“She overflows of talent. In cooking, she was honestly the best. And I remember that her sense of taste was really sensitive, just that she was overshadowed by Minjoon. There was even the time that she tried Alan’s risotto once and perfectly recreated it.....”

“Ah, I also saw that. Isn’t Kaya unexpectedly close to the absolute sense of taste?”

“The absolute taste that didn’t appear in history until now appears two of them at the same time? Prepare well. To go to Alan’s restaurant tomorrow you have to rest well. It will be quite a rough adventure.”

Rachel’s expression, that as listening to the conversation of the two, wasn’t that comfortable. It was because she remembered the words Jo Minjoon said to her in the past. ‘The one that suits teacher isn’t me, but Kaya.’ Even if she had placed interest in Kaya, she wouldn’t be able to approach her immediately because of the schedules of Grand Chef.

‘If it’s possible.’

Rachel raised herself. Emily looked at her wearing an overcoat and asked with a weird expression.

“Where are you going?”

“Ah, I have something to think about.”

The place she went to after speaking like that was the room of the men. After she pressed the bell and some time passed, Jeremy’s voice was heard.

[What are you doing in this secluded night on a room where there are a lot of men?]

“Stop with those greasy words. Is Minjoon sleeping? If he’s not, I would like it if you told him that I’m looking for him.”

[He’s out.]

“Is he in the resting room in the hall then?”

[No.]

At the short reply, Rachel frowned. Jeremy said with a bothersome voice.

[He got out of the hotel, with Martin’s permission. He said he had to go and meet someone. What was the name? You know, that girl. I suddenly can’t remember the name.]

“Girl?”

[Why, you know. The one he called for an entire hour at the airport. So good to see.]

Rachel exclaimed.

“Kaya Lotus?”

—

It was when he was about to lay down on his bed after washing himself that he received a call. ‘I’m also at Florencia. Can you come out?’ At those words, he was going to say yes unconsciously, when he realized that he was in the middle of broadcasting. But of

course, as it was night he would only have to sleep, so it didn't have that much meaning that it was a broadcast.....

But it was fortunate that Martin was a flexible person. After explaining the situation and asked him to go out for a moment, Martin said along a meaningful smile.

“Originally, I would send a cameraman with you, but as it's late I will let this one pass. As many things can happen at night. You will come early, right? I recommend you to do so. You know that we have a live broadcast tomorrow, right?”

“.....Thank you.”

Although he said it jokingly, but in the end he decided to take it as he had agreed.

The place where Kaya called him was Ponte Vecchio. It was the only bridge that remained from the era of the romans. When Hitler battled against England and retreated to Florencia, he destroyed all the bridges except Vecchio, so you didn't have to explain anymore as to the worth and beauty it had.

You could see people walking in the middle of the stores that were selling diamond rings and golden things. A yellow light was spread from a lamp that was hanging in the building, and between that a blue and white moonlight shone over the lake.

It was beautiful. Although he passed through here in the afternoon, by then he couldn't properly enjoy the scenery as he was focused on eating. Not only that, but the night at Vecchio bridge had another characteristic compared to the afternoon.

Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings. Most were walking in pairs, and he saw a single woman that was at the handrail with arms crossed, but it didn't seem like Kaya. A hood shirt with a leather jacket. A black jean that stucked to her legs. Although it was a fashion Kaya liked.....It didn't seem like her. Because the hair that stucked out her hood wasn't black, but brown.

“.....She’s still not here.”

It was at that moment when he grabbed his cellphone and called Kaya. A ringtone started to sound from the woman he had just passed. Jo Minjoon stopped his steps and looked back. The woman opened her cellphone and opened her mouth.

“Yeah.”

[Yeah.]

The same voice was heard from the cellphone and the woman. Jo Minjoon moved without saying anything. And when he got as close as ten steps away from her, he opened her mouth.

“Where are you? I can’t see you.”

The woman looked at her surroundings as if something was wrong and when she discovered Jo Minjoon she fixed her head on him. Soon, a dense smile bloomed on the face of the woman, on Kaya. She opened her mouth while still holding her cellphone.

“I’m at Ponte Vecchio. At the middle, under a lamp. There’s a sculpture next to me, but I don’t know who the sculptor is. Was it Leonardo or Dante? Where are you?”

“I’m also at Ponte Vecchio. Did you wear warm clothes? It’s a bit cold at night.”

“As you can see..... Not, I did. A hood shirt and a jacket is plenty.”

“You came out alone?”

“How amazing of a person am I to be hanging with body guards?”

Kaya smirked and said. Jo Minjoon asked.

“But until when are we planning to play this?”

“I wonder. Should I give you a sign?”

“How?”

“The spell on Cinderella dispels when the bell rings at 12 o’clock. We also have to ring the bell. I will ring it for you, the bell.”

Kaya placed her phone in front of her face. And then, slowly placed her lips on the part that had the mic. From the handphone he had in his ear, he could hear her breath slowly. And soon, it felt like Kaya's lips had reached it.

Smooch. The moment it was heard was only a moment, and the silence was long..... but it felt like the echo still remained in his ear. Just like a bell. Kaya smiled brightly.

“The magic, it got dispelled right?”

Chapter 131: Florencia's Dawn (4)

Kaya ended the call. Maybe that would have been the easiest way to dispel the magic. Kaya walked towards him. Then, as if she was knocking she lightly hit the back of his hand that was holding his still-terrified face.

“Is there someone inside?”

“.....Yes. There is.”

“Why are you putting that dumb-like expression? Why? Was the stimulation too excessive for the mister absolute sense of taste?”

“Are you also like this with other people?”

“Don't be so strict.I understand. I don't. I don't do it.”

Kaya treated him as if he was an ill-natured kid. Jo Minjoon was perplexed. Since when was Kaya this relaxed in front of him? Jo Minjoon glanced at her brown hair and said.

“Did you dye it?”

“Yes. Nowadays I also have a coordinator. Did I tell you last time?”

“No. Anyways, it's pretty. But even so, I like black more.”

“Well, honestly speaking if you aren't conscious you don't even know that it changed. Even if it's brown it's a dark brown.”

Kaya talked like that and rolled her hair with her finger. Jo Minjoon, who was looking at that, mumbled “should I also dye.” Kaya put on a severe face and said.

“No. Never. If you do that I will immediately dye it blonde.”

“.....Why can't I?”

“I don't like it. I like your black hair.”

Looking at Kaya throwing a tantrum like that, a smile appeared rather than feeling annoyed. Why did she feel so pretty in

whatever she did? Jo Minjoon unconsciously pinched her cheek. Kaya rolled her eyes while still having her cheek pinched and glared at his hand.

“Wats dis, dis line.”

“As you act like a kid, it makes me treat you like one. It’s your fault.”

“Let’s speak after u teik ur hands off.”

After he let go, Kaya glared at him while rubbing her cheek.

“It hurts.”

“Sorry.”

“.....You always apologized immediately. I can’t even get angry anymore.”

The two of them kept discussing like that for a while more. For some, it may be a meaningless conversation, but they weren’t doing this to pass the time at all. They needed those normal conversations, the flowing of the meaningless time the most. They grieved it the most...

...to the point they could endure the sleepiness. These light words, which came and went through this chilly air, felt like it embraced them in a warm way. One hand, or perhaps it was two hands of distance that they were separated from each other, but their words and feelings certainly reached the other.

“So tomorrow you are going to Alan’s restaurant?”

“Yeah. We aren’t going in the morning, but at lunch.”

“How good. I also want to go with you.”

“.....Do you have time?”

“No. That’s why I want to go.”

Kaya clinged on the handrail with a depressed face. Jo Minjoon was putting a nervous face next to her and prepared to hold her for

if something unexpected happened. Kaya turned her head while still clinging on the handrail and looked at Jo Minjoon without saying anything. Kaya extended her hand.

Jo Minjoon chose to look at her instead of grabbing that hand. Kaya swung her arm and said.

“Will you grab my hand?”

It didn't mean to hold her for when she fell. However Jo Minjoon wordlessly grabbed her hand. Although the cold air pinched their hands, the blood that flows hotly warmed up their hands. Kaya sensed that heat and said.

“Nowadays, I'm grabbing the hands of people the most since I was born. I'm not the type to like handshakes much. But the funny thing is that however many times I grab a hand, there is no one that grabs me as tightly as this.”

“Are you scared?”

“.....Yeah. Although I want to boast in front of you, I feel like I want to be more honest with you. I'm scared. In the past I just lived as a part of the world, but now the whole world is looking at me. I just thought that I had succeeded..... But it wasn't only that. The funny thing is...”

Kaya grabbed Jo Minjoon's hands tightly and then pointed on his right hand with her left one.

“...even if I'm that scared,as someone grabs my hands like this once..... I can place down my feelings. It's not that you hugged me, and it's only grabbing hands. People are really funny, right?”

Jo Minjoon just looked at Kaya. Like coincidence, the shadow of the moon appeared behind her head. Between the long and dispersed hair the moonlight that was reflected by the water shone, and that just seemed like a texture.

“What happened with what I told you last time? You said that something would happen soon.”

“It didn’t yet. So don’t worry.”

“Can I ask you what it is about?”

“I told you. That if I told you I will rely on you, and that if I rely on you I become weak. I don’t like that. I will become strong. That’s why things like relying.....”

Kaya got off the handrail. She put her hand on the pocket of her hood shirt while standing firmly. It seemed like her clothes got pulled and her hat stuck to her hair but soon, it flicked like a rubber band and it got taken off. The colour of the hair grabbed his attention. Just like the colour got different, she was also different.

“I don’t want to do it. I want to become an adult. That’s why I have to put in more effort. I have to but.....”

Kaya’s eyes directed to his hand. You couldn’t distinguish at first glance as to which finger belonged to whom. Kaya took in a breath and slowly said a with trembling voice.

“This hand, it’s difficult to let go.”

Originally, she hadn’t planned to do this. However for the past few weeks, she realized after Jo Minjoon wasn’t there with her, that she was in the world alone. That the meaning he had for her was a lot more huge than what she had thought.

That’s why she grabbed his hand. She thought that it had to be only a moment. But it wasn’t. She realized it after she grabbed it. That she didn’t grab it because she wanted to, but because it was a hand she didn’t want to let go.

‘I’m certainly.....’

Kaya raised her brows as if she was angry, but her opened eyes were trembling while having moisture in it. Those eyes directed to Jo Minjoon. Although you wouldn’t know if it was because he was Asian that you couldn’t read his expression well, or he actually was like that..... But his face that seemed expressionless seemed kind of unkind.

She didn't want to look at that face. She could close her eyes and turn her head. However Kaya didn't do so. No, she couldn't. It seemed like Jo Minjoon was letting go of her hand, and soon he slowly pulled her from her shoulders. She felt Jo Minjoon's chin that touched her neck. Jo Minjoon's voice made the insides of Kaya's hood feel hot.

“Don't be scared.”

As it was calming her, patting her. The moment she heard that voice, Kaya felt that the uneasiness in her heart all melted away. She felt like she returned to her hometown. But of course, she didn't have any days which she felt comfortable in her hometown.

Kaya also hugged him. It was at that moment when she brought her cheek to his neck. She felt a weird feeling. And soon, she realized that that feeling was because of the scar that remained in his neck.

Kaya placed Jo Minjoon's shoulders. Below the lamp light, the scar that had a strange colour was seen more clearly. She said with a lower and rougher voice than ever.

“I told you last time. That you are most important next to my family.”

“Yes.”

“It's a lie.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon didn't even have the time to be perplexed. Kaya buried her face on Jo Minjoon's neck. No, it seemed like that. But it wasn't it. Kaya slowly pressed her lips over the bright scar. A tickling and a hot breath came out from between her trembling lips, and even before the heat that came out of her breath disappeared, her lips covered the scar.

Why did the smooch sound feel like when you smacked your lips after eating a dish? Kaya slowly took her head away and then raised her long eyelashes to look at him.

“You are as important as my family.”

She laughed.

“Just like there’s no way for your scar to disappear, my feelings also won’t change.”

—

The lodging. Jo Minjoon having gone out last night was something that was known by every participant. Anderson, that wanted to ask him how it turned out when he returned, fell asleep while sitting in the sofa and all the others sought Jo Minjoon the instant they woke up.

“.....He still didn’t come in?”

Sera asked with a perplexed voice. Jeremy laughed with a wicked smile.

“If a man and a woman doesn’t return before night, the story is obvious.”

“.....Jeremy. If you have the age don’t spit out things that easily. If that wasn’t the case, and even if that was, is it something to speak in front of the kids?”

“What about it? You also kept saying this and that at your time. You acting this way is funnier.”

“I’m beggin you, so please shut that mouth of yours.”

It was at that moment when Jeremy laughed while saying ‘See? She’s originally like this.’ Jo Minjoon carefully showed himself. He laughed awkwardly.

“I was a bit late, right?”

“A lot. Did you sleep?”

“Yes, I slept a bit on a bench.....What’s that expression?”

Jo Minjoon looked at Emily’s mouth that was opened because of the astonishment and got confused. Sera put a provocative smile

and said.

“Well, I don’t dislike that free life.”

“.....Is closing your eyes for a moment on the bench something that should go up to that way?”

“Yes?”

Sera looked at Jo Minjoon with weird eyes. And Jo Minjoon also looked at her with the same eyes. They fired off question marks with each other, and the one that stopped that was Anderson.

“You talked all night?”

“Well, yes. I got asleep at the bench for a moment. We had a lot to talk about since it’s been a while since we saw each other.”

“Right.”

Anderson nodded as if he knew that would be the case. In the first case, he didn’t even ask because he was curious. He just wanted to clear the doubt everyone had about Jo Minjoon with his own mouth. Jo Minjoon and Kaya, although he didn’t want to admit it, were more naive and pure than what they looked to be.

Sera and Emily exchanged sights for a moment. They were checking if they had understood the conversation between Anderson and Jo Minjoon. Soon, Sera said with a confused voice.

“Nothing happened?”

“Yes?”

“Ah, nothing.”

As they exchanged glances as if it was weird, she felt more embarrassed that she thought about something she shouldn’t have. Jeremy cleared his throat and said.

“That’s why I told you not to jump to conclusions early.”

The place they went to to have breakfast was a pizza store in town. But Alan wasn’t here because it was planned that they would

have lunch at his restaurant. In the first place, it was also difficult for the head chef to empty his place for a long time.

‘For a slice of pizza early in the morning.’

Thinking about it, it was weird. Eating one, no, three pans of Jeon doesn't feel that excessive but in the case of pizza it felt that eating half of it was eating a big amount. Even when the pizza that was cooked in a brazier wasn't that thick.

Sera ordered a margarita pizza and said.

“It's obvious for Italian to eat a whole pizza even if they are women. Just like you don't share hamburgers.”

“Well, compared to American pizza, the thickness is thin and it's not as wide, so I can understand it..... But it kind of feels like I'm eating a lot. In my country, it's a basic thing for three people to eat one pizza. And we don't even eat pizza in the morning.”

“Morning pizza is really healthy.”

Looking at Sera talking like that, he felt that it was marvelous. It wasn't that simply kind of foods changed when the country was different. Eating habits, attitude on the ingredient, and on top of that the basic constitution of the ingredients was different. Just by looking at this pizza, it was a menu that would fill you all day in Korea when you ate it at morning.

And it wasn't an exception because it was Jo Minjoon. When breakfast ended, Jo Minjoon had to get in the car with a face that seemed to suffer of low pressure even at first glance. Even so, for a body that didn't receive cheese well at morning, and as he also ate it with flour, looking that his stomach rumbled wasn't a weird thing.

‘Would Kaya have eaten breakfast?’

Thinking about it, Kaya had also stayed awake the whole night, so whatever she would be doing right now she would be in quite a tired state. Perhaps, he should have sent her a little bit earlier, but

as they felt good to see each other they couldn't easily say to separate. Jo Minjoon took out his cellphone.

[Me : You aren't tired?]

[Kaya : I slept a bit in the car. They said we will be broadcasting something at a restaurant. I will have to sleep again while eating.]

[Me :I'm sorry. I grabbed you until late.]

[Kaya : Were you the only one to grab me? I also grabbed you. I will sleep for a moment. Message me later.]

It was an unexpected thing that the reply came immediately, but Kaya stopped the conversation as if she was soon tired. Jo Minjoon didn't send her any more messages on purpose. In the first place, he also felt sleepy. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes, and Anderson, who was driving, opened his mouth.

“But about the name of Alan's restaurant. However I see, that was copied from teacher Rachel's restaurant, right? Olive island.”

“.....Probably. I retired even before Alan became a head chef.....The situation wasn't as to entrust the main store to that kid. Even so, looking that he leaves a trace of my restaurant and my husband's, he's a really good kid.”

“There would only be Rachel that treats Alan like a kid in this world.”

Emily smirked and said.

It was when they arrived at Alan's 'Olive Island'. They stood in front of the restaurant and Martin asked them to wait for a moment while standing. As it was something that hadn't happened until now and they looked at him with a weird expression, Martin smiled brightly and said.

“Although I don't know from what country it is, they say there's this saying that food is more delicious when you share it. But of course, between you 6 the food will be plenty and you may even

leave some, but even so, if one more fork and a knife is added it may be possible to enjoy a more delicious meal than now.”

“.....Just what are you trying to say that your speech is so long?”

“There’s a special guest to be with you today.”

Guest. At those words, Jo Minjoon frowned. At that moment, he got one hunch. However that probability didn’t have to be right. If it was as he thought, the time he had while not even sleeping would become meaningless in an instant.

However, the moment gave him a weird sight, Jo Minjoon became certain that his supposition was right. Martin pointed his back. A woman who was wearing a gray and sleeveless sweater and a dense, smoky makeup was looking at him with speechlessly. Martin opened his mouth.

“It’s the winner of Grand Chef, Kaya Lotus!”

Chapter 132: Their Live Broadcast (1)

When introductions about Kaya ended, Martin opened his mouth.

“I already told you but I will repeat it once more. Today you won’t simply be having a meal at Olive Island. The screens of all the cameras will be broadcasted alive in all the world and many people will look you.”

“Is there something we have to be aware of, more than usual?”

“It should be badmouthing. It’s good if you make it more funny, but that can’t be done by being aware of that. Just show your true look like usual.”

The brief introduction ended, and they all entered Olive Island. Rachel didn’t finish seating on her chair and then put a dim expression after looking at the pictures hanged on the wall. There was a picture with the young Alan in the middle and a man and a woman smiling towards the lens. Although the quality was bad compared to the cellphone cameras nowadays, even that messy definition was enough to make him remember some memories.

Jeremy glanced and looked at Rachel. He got astounded and said.

“Until when are you planning to live tied at the shadows of that guy?”

“.....What about that? He’s my husband.”

“You suffered so much when you were alive, and are still like that even after he dies. I told you right? That your life will become tiresome after you marry Daniel.”

“Just like it was tiring, it was fun and happy. It’s enough with that.”

Rachel replied with a composed voice and then slowly took her eyes off the picture. Although the regret in her eyes didn’t get

completely erased, the smile that appeared after she sat was really fine.

“It’s been a while, Kaya. Now that I see I couldn’t even properly congratulate you. Congratulations.”

“Thank you.”

Kaya smiled brightly and replied. Jo Minjoon looked at that Kaya in a new light. It hasn’t been that long since he didn’t see her, but there were many things that had changed. Could you say that most of her recklessness and disobeying side had disappeared? She felt more adult like.....And more lady like.

Sera cleared her throat and said.

“It’s the first time meeting you. You are as pretty as when I saw you in TV. Is it because you are young?”

“.....If you bring out the age what do I become?”

Emily, that was next to her, mumbled in a depressed voice. Jeremy said in his pretentious voice like usual.

“But they said they were together all night.....Didn’t you know you were meeting today?”

“We didn’t. Our agent is also bad tempered.”

Kaya replied like that and glared at her agent for a moment. When she said she was going to meet Jo Minjoon for a moment, the agent put on a smile you couldn’t know the meaning of and just asked ‘will you be fine?’. Jo Minjoon looked at her compassionately.

“You are suffering a lot.”

“You too.”

The two of them clinked their cup of water sniffed with the same posture. Anderson, that looked at that, shook his head. Sera smirked and looked at Anderson.

“Are they always like that?”

“You said you saw the broadcast. Just think of it like that.”

“.....I thought that it was directed.”

It felt like watching a springtime drama. But even so, as they basically played in a fresh and new way, it consoled them that it didn't exhaust them looking at them.....but they couldn't do anything about their side hurting. Sera smiled and looked at Anderson.

“Anderson. Do you want us to imitate them?”

“I'm a celibate.”

“Who told you to do it for real? It's only an imitation.”

It was when Sera pouted with a sad face. Martin approached them and said.

“Just like I told you, today's lunch will be broadcasted live on the internet. There are already 120.000 viewers in wait. Are you all ready?”

“A moment please. I'm checking my make up.”

Sera raised her mirror and said. Kaya just looked at Jo Minjoon instead of a mirror.

“Is my make up okay?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay then.”

Kaya nodded with a firm expression. And then, some time flowed and Martin yelled.

“The live broadcast is starting. In 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!”

“Hello. It is Hunger Trip.”

Because there was no audience, things like cheers was obviously not heard. However, on the screen Martin spread, chatting lines

flowed.

[Oh, it's starting.]

[It's really been a while since I saw Rachel Rose.]

[Huh? But why is Lotus over there?]

[As I read an article, they say she's a special guest?]

[I did see some of her activities outside, but it's marvelous looking that she's together with Jo Minjoon.]

At the same time the contents of the chat flowed, the servers approached and brought appetizer bread and ciabatta. And at the same time, Alan came in front of them and said in a confident voice.

“It's the first boastful thing of my restaurant. It's a ciabatta cooked by a patissier with 30 years of experience by regulating the temperature and humidity everyday. The green butter over here was made by mixing finely ground basil and butter, and the right one is goat cheese garlic butter we made ourselves by mixing goat milk and garlic. The thing in the plate is a sauce we made by mixing olive oil, balsamic, and vinegar.”

“The shape of the butter.....It's really pretty.”

Kaya said with an amazed expression. Just like she had said, the butters that came out with the appetizer bread had quite a marvelous look. Although you didn't know if it was handmade or shaped by a mold, but in the case of goat milk it had the shape of a baby goat, and the basil butter had the shape of leaves.

It was then. Sera extended her knife without hesitation and sliced the butter. And the exact part of the goat was the neck. Kaya, that was appreciating the butter with sweet eyes, looked at Sera with shocked eyes. Sera, that was smearing the goat butter in the ciabatta, flinched and looked at Kaya.

“Uh.....Did I do something wrong?”

“.....It’s nothing.”

Kaya hesitated for a moment and then, she also raised her knife and smeared the goat butter on the ciabatta. The depressed expression was also for a moment. Soon, the hesitation that was in Kaya’s face melted softly, and it became a smile. She mumbled in a happy voice.

“Delicious.....”

“The bread and the butter is really good.”

Jo Minjoon mumbled in a calm voice. The score of the ciabatta was 7, the and the score of the butter was also 7. However when he smeared the butter on the bread, the contents of the window changed.

[Ciabatta smeared with goat cheese garlic butter]

Freshness : 98%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 8/10

Just by smearing butter the cooking score increased. And that meant the combination of the two was that perfect. And in the case of basil butter, it wasn’t as different as goat butter. While the sommelier approached them and filled their cups with red wine, Alan looked at Alan and asked him.

“Minjoon. How is it? This butter. Do you think you know how it was made and with what ingredients?”

“Alan, have mercy. Nowadays i’m suffering because of that question.”

“Big responsibility follows a big strength. The uncle of spider man said that. As god has given you an ability that makes others want to follow your back just by imagining it, you have to put up with that much annoyance. I’m also putting up with the danger of

my recipe being exposed because of you.”

“.....For now I will only tell the ratio of the ingredients. The ratio of goat cheese and refined butter is 1-1. There’s about one clove of garlic for one tablespoon of butter. It seems like you roasted it, grounded it, and put some grounded white pepper. Is there something wrong?”

Rather than Jo Minjoon, the others looked at Alan with a more nervous face. Alan shook his head and smiled as if he couldn’t fall for it.

“Today, I will really have to be prepared for my recipe to get exposed.”

“Don’t worry. If it’s too difficult, it’s even hard for me to read it.”

It wasn’t a lie. The things in which he could acquire the recipes of was on the dishes that had the same cooking level as his tasting level. The speed in which the chat got down quickened.

[Wow, certainly absolute sense of taste!]

[I also want to have that sense.]

[Look at Rachel’s eyes, she’s so proud she seems to die.]

[Kaya’s eyes aren’t also normal. It really looks like they are dating.]

Jo Minjoon glanced at Alan. The eyes that looked at him calmly soon shook as if he was surprised.

[Alan Craig]

Cooking Level : 9

Baking Level : 6

Tasting Level : 9

Decoration Level : 7

‘.....The level increased in that while.’

Originally, Alan's cooking level was 8. But of course, thinking that the skills of a chef that was expected to soon receive a three star stopped was weirder, but even so he couldn't think that he had crossed over already.

Expectation appeared between envy and admiration. Perhaps, there would be 10 points dish among what Alan cooked. Just by thinking of that, saliva gathered in his mouth.

He wetted his mouth with wine. Perhaps because it was a before meal wine, the alcohol percentage wasn't that high and the flavor was soft and sweet. You could clearly know that it was a high quality article as you almost didn't feel thickness and tastelessness. He looked at Kaya and said.

"Now that I think about it, there are many things for a restaurant to have a perfect composition. The chefs and the servers are the basic things, and you also need a sommelier, patissier and on top of that a food coordinator."

"Do you even need a food coordinator?"

"I also thought like that at first, but recently I changed my mind after looking at teacher Rachel sculpting with the potato. The feeling in the dish changed in an instant with one kniving."

"How was it that you are like that?"

"Ah, wait. I have a picture I took."

Jo Minjoon took out his cellphone and started to touch it. Kaya stucked close to his shoulders to the point they almost touched. Emily said with a strict voice.

"Kaya, Minjoon! The viewers are saying not to play and whisper with each other!"

"Ah, this was a live broadcast. I'm sorry."

[lol those two are so cute i'm getting crazy.]

[It would be good if they marry. And if it was a drama I would

wait for an ending.]

[Who's more pretty between Sera, Emily and Kaya? Kaya for me.]

[Just by looking at the face Emily. Also looking at the body Sera. Looking at the feeling Kaya.]

It felt like the eyes of the viewers that were smiling beyond the screen was right in front of them. Sera said with an indispensed face.

“It's really awkward as I see it for real.”

She wasn't talking about the chat. Because the place her two eyes directed to wasn't on the chat but on Kaya and Jo Minjoon. She knew that Jo Minjoon had a good relationship with Kaya, but is it because the look Kaya showed in front of her was quite polite and courteous? The attitude of Kaya right now was felt quite freshly.

“You will get accustomed to it.”

Emily said with a calm expression. Actually, Rachel and Anderson weren't even bothered about them and were enjoying the bread. In the case of Jeremy, perhaps because his nature was really natural, he was drinking some wine while looking at them.

“I'm the only strange one.”

Why did she suddenly feel the fine ciabatta in her mouth, sour? But fortunately, the dish that came out was enough to console her feelings. Over a long stone pan made with marble, seven spoons shining in silver were placed. Maybe because they focused on decoration rather than actual use, that the handle of the spoon was curved like a high heel.

On the wide and deeply carved spoon cheek, there was caramelized kumquat, beet, and orange simmered in sugar placed over, and below that there was a pink cream.

Jo Minjoon put the amuse bouche in his mouth. The alarm window of the system popped up like a firework, and the flavor of

it also spread like an explosion. The cooking score was 8. And the flavor wasn't that disappointing.

On the beet and the kumquash, the juices of the orange overflowed and covered the slightly bitter flavor, and on the cream that was below that a faint aroma of lemon and flavorful taste of tomato was slightly felt. The pieces of kumquash that got crushed between his teeth harmonizing with the other ingredients like a spice seemed just like stealing a meal of dwarves in one bite.

That profound flavor twitched on the muscles of Jo Minjoon's face. The eyes and mouth that tremble, and the wrinkles between his carved nose and eyes. The cameraman recorded all of that clearly.

[Wow.....Look at that expression.]

[I think that he's the best in expressing a flavor with his expressions, better than any chefs or celebrities I saw until now.]

[He can only do so. The level in which he feels flavor is different from the others.]

Jo Minjoon didn't look at the chat. He suddenly got a thought. That just like the one that appreciates the worth of food is someone dying of hunger, that he, who grew by eating the non delicious food of his mother could become more sensitive in flavor. Although for the others it would be a 'wow, it's fine.'.....For him it could only become an emotion that couldn't be expressed to others.

But although his tongue was sensitive, the preciseness of his tongue fell compared to Kaya. But at the same time he thought. That he didn't fall at all with her when it came to eating things deliciously. He was self confident.

He put a nice to see smile and turned to look at Kaya. Kaya also put the spoon in her mouth and started to chew the food, and soon she was putting a similar expression as him.

“It’s delicious.”

“Now that I see Kaya, did you go to a Michelin restaurant after Grand Chef?”

“No, it’s the first. That’s why i’m this flustered. Can’t you see?”

“I can. That’s why i’m asking you. It would have been good if you came with me when I went to the three star restaurant.”

“That time, I didn’t show it, but I was really envious. But even so, I still haven’t gone to a three star. Someday.....I will certainly go.”

“You said it last time. To not only go to one, but to also make one. You can do it.”

“Right. You can also do it.”

Kaya smiled calmly. The wrinkles that was slightly seen below her dense smoky make up was pretty. Jo Minjoon, that was admiring at her face slowly realized that the surroundings was weirdly quiet. He looked at his surroundings. All the others were looking at the two with weird eyes.

And the chat showed their feelings instead of them [Why are they doing this to us?]

Chapter 133: Their Live Broadcast (2)

“.....Why are you looking at us like that?”

Kaya asked with a trembling voice. Jeremy placed a finger in his empty spoon and said while spinning it.

“Your relationship is really good. Taking into account that you are boy and girl.”

“You aren’t planning to do a shabby debate such as ‘is it possible to be friends between a boy and girl?’, right?”

“Haha, i’m old. I don’t have the energy to do such things as debates. Instead, I have something I want to ask you. If it’s not impolite. The two of you, are you really friends? I’m curious because you too are really close taking into account that you are only friends.”

[I believed that Jeremy would do it from the start.]

[Please, god. Just don’t say ‘yes, that’s right.’ to that question.....]

Those kinds of chats immediately raised the scroll. Sera and Emily looked at Jo Minjoon and Kaya with eyes filled with expectation. However Kaya didn’t get perplexed. She raised one brow with a calm attitude.

“Is there a standard as to a friend has to be this close?”

“Of course there’s not, but even so this old man can only see the relationship between you younguns to be progressing and peculiar. Kaya, is there no feelings for the opposite sex? I’m like this because you are really good to see.”

Jeremy was saying everything while laughing. Kaya hesitated with a slightly perplexed expression and slightly turned to look at Jo Minjoon. And Jo Minjoon also smacked his lips for a moment. It was difficult to say, it’s exactly this.....but it certainly was true

that there were many times that those feelings came and went. It was then. Anderson opened his mouth.

“What if there is? They won’t even be able to meet.”

Because of the sudden defense, Kaya and Jo Minjoon could let out sighs of relief. Sera slightly glanced and said with a strange voice.

“Ey, what’s important of meeting and not. The important thing is the feeling.”

“What if you have that? If you can’t converse properly and don’t have time to share, it becomes meaningless. People that should be together will, and people who shouldn’t won’t. Stop teasing naive guys.”

At Anderson’s words, Jeremy became an ill tempered old man in an instant. Whether people inside the chat let out sighs or not, Anderson didn’t mind them and pointed in front with a calm voice.

“Bring the next thing.”

[Ah! That Anderson, why is he acting this thoughtlessly?]

[It seems like he’s doing it on purpose...]

[Look at Sera’s expression next to him. She’s really depressed. XD]

[My expression is also like that.]

But after a while, their expressions soon became bright, as if they have never pointed the two of them. The look of the ceviche that came as an appetizer was really pretty. The thinly sliced tuna showed a red colour like an uncooked cow meat and was placed like a tray, and the shrimp meat that was cooked over it was placed like a tower in a pointed way. The apple mint, coconut jelly, and the white foam, etc seemed just like a house and a tree and it felt like watching the tuna placed over was just like watching a village. Sera got amazed and opened her mouth.

“I know that as an epicurean, I will look really bad after saying this but..... I’m talking about putting things like foam in places like this. Actually, even if it’s big the amount is small so it doesn’t feel that much, so do you know why they put this? Of course, if you are like Jo Minjoon that has an absolute taste, you will even know the effects of that small amount, but normal people wouldn’t feel much. Is it certainly decoration?”

[I agree with that. I have never felt something to be more delicious because there was foam placed on it.]

[Are you ignoring beer foam right now?]

[No, this foam and that foam is different..]

[Actually, I don’t even know if beer foam is that delicious.]

As if it was a question many people had,

“How can that be? Of course, it’s not that it wasn’t thought to be only a decoration. First eat and let’s talk later.”

Rachel talked like that and then put some foam on the shrimp meat and chewed.

“I’m certain. Although people won’t feel the flavor of this foam to be that special, the people that cook this can certainly feel it. What would they have thought when they put this foam? You can think it that way.”

At Rachel’s words the others also started to eat the ceviche. Jo Minjoon thought like he could understand Rachel’s words. The moment he ate the tuna along with shrimp, foam and the other herbs, amazingly enough he felt Alan’s thoughts. Rachel, that was looking at Jo Minjoon, opened her mouth.

“Minjoon, can you answer it?”

“Yes. The fishy smell shrimp or fish has, no, it’s vague to even say that it’s fishy. Because it’s closer to the aroma of the sea rather than a bad smell. However, there are cases that the fishy smell is

felt more disgustingly when met with other ingredients when it alone was endurable. Just like when you sprinkle salt in watermelon, the sweet flavor strengthens, and with the fishy smell, it gets stronger depending on what you mix it with.”

“You know it well. This lemon foam has the role of bridge between the ingredients. It gets tangled between the flavors, and it’s tying down everything in one place. You guessed it right.”

[I think that Rachel loves Minjoon more than Kaya. Even the light in my grandmother’s eyes wasn’t as hot as that.]

[Won’t he become her real disciple like this? It seemed like Rachel was slowly returning.]

[What if she does. That is over Santa Monica. It’s far, and the price isn’t a joke. Even if I want to go, I can’t.]

[But Jo can feel the flavor well and also expresses it luxuriously. At times, it feels like Jo speaks better english than me.]

“Thank you.”

“Yes?”

“.....Ah, I was talking to the chat. They praised me for speaking well in english.”

Jo Minjoon, that was laughing while looking at the camera, replied in an embarrassed voice while looking at Rachel’s weird face. While the people were laughing, Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya.

“How is it? Does it suit your tastes?”

At Jo Minjoon’s question, Kaya rolled her eyes as if she was thinking for a moment. And soon, put on a smile and replied.

“Yeah, it’s not an unfamiliar.”

“How good”

He didn’t ask her if it was delicious. Because it was obvious that it was. It was 8 points. Jo Minjoon didn’t get that disappointed by

the score. Alan's cooking score was 9, and if he had personally cooked he would be able to make 9 points dishes quite frequently. However, the role of the head chef wasn't personally cooking. Even if he did so, he wouldn't be able to cook all the dishes that would get served to the customers by himself.

In the end what a head chef was, was just like what Rachel had shown before, how well you could control people in your kitchen. Even if your cooking level was 7, if you had the power to do so it wasn't difficult to get the seat of Sous chef. And obviously if his cooking skills were good, it would at most be 5 or 6, and if he was good 7. It could only be like that. So leading them and making this kind of dish already showed Alan's skills.

‘If I get entrusted to be a head chef.....’

Honestly, he thought it was going to be difficult. Although he had become a head chef once through Grand Chef, actually rather than controlling them, it was more relying on their abilities. It was possible because it was a competition, and an unavoidable thing because they were amateurs. Kaya slightly glanced at her surroundings and said.

“The food suits my tastes, but the atmosphere doesn't. On a high class restaurant i'm not accustomed to, and cameras in front of my eyes. There are words pouring from the chat. Ah, you. Please, don't tie us together just because we are talking. Can't we even converse?”

Kaya was talking with Jo Minjoon for a moment and then glared at the camera as if she was displeased. Jo Minjoon hurriedly patted her back.

“I thought that your temperament died off, but Kaya Lotus is still Kaya Lotus. Just tell them to tie us off. We won't die because they do so. That would be better than getting scolded because we got angry at the viewers.”

[One vote at them, making a scandal before new year.]

[It would be difficult this year. Kaya is being called in many places because of Grand Chef.]

[Then, is this a moment's opportunity they have to be together? Now that I think like that, it's quite romantic.]

[But isn't Minjoon taking her after having talked like that in public?]

[He's a scary bastard.]

".....Everyone. I'm not that gloomy."

"You are a bit."

"Ah, how can you also be like that?"

Jo Minjoon said while looking at Kaya with a disappointed face. Kaya smirked and soon, extended her hand and raised Jo Minjoon's neckband to cover his scar. Jo Minjoon said while laughing awkwardly.

"There's no need to mind it. Even I don't do it."

"You remember what I said about that scar, right? That's why don't say things like don't mind. Because it's not something to mind or not."

".....Now, you are talking about things only you two know?"

Sera forcefully laughed. Jo Minjoon cleared his throat with an embarrassed face. Kaya also flushed as if she had gone far and just touched her hair. Rachel looked at that Kaya and said in a soft voice.

"Kaya. What did you think when eating the ceviche?"

"This ceviche, it just feels like a letter to you?"

".....Yes?"

At the sudden words, Rachel opened her eyes roundly. Kaya pointed to the emptied plate.

"You said so before. The ingredients placed like a village over the

red tuna. Don't you think of the word 'Rose Island'?"

At Kaya's words, Jo Minjoon let out an exclamation. Thinking about it, he thought that it may be possible to interpret it like that. As they looked at Alan, he smiled with an embarrassed face.

"It's a correct interpretation. Actually, I would have liked it if teacher Rachel realized it....."

"Wasn't it a menu you usually sold?"

"That's right. I wanted to show off wherever I could that I learned below you.....And it turned out like this. I would like it if it became a present you liked."

Rachel endured the tears that came out and pressed her lips. Her wrinkled mouth twitched slowly and soon, she let out a cry like sound and then shut up again. Sera, that was next to her, grabbed Rachel's shoulders with a worried look. Rachel forcefully smiled as if she was calm and then looked at Alan with teary eyes.

"Thank you Alan. It's a really cool and good gift."

".....Don't cry. It's not a gift I gave you because I wanted to see your tears."

Alan said with a regretful voice. The teacher that was once shining and composed seemed to become weak in front of time. You become weak when you become old. Physically, and emotionally. Could he have thought that that obvious rule would slip off Rachel? Looking at her weak side, he felt pain in his heart.

[Rachel.....It's good to see her in a while, but the atmosphere became weird.]

[Perhaps it's because of the memories, or because those memories are already things of the past. But the certain thing is that I really want to drink beer. I'm going to the fridge.]

[I also want to see Daniel. Why do geniuses leave off that early?]

[I was only 10 when the Rose Couple were in activity, but were

they really that amazing?]

[I'm answering to the one that said if they were amazing, they were legends. They raised up the level of american restaurants in one go.]

Looking at the chat and Alan's attitude, Jo Minjoon felt a corner of his heart getting hot. Alan, and everyone were recollecting their memories. A chef that lives off in your memories. No, a chef that can live in your memories. Isn't that the most complete life for a chef? He thought like that. Jo Minjoon slowly opened his mouth.

"How envious. Rachel, and Alan."

He wasn't saying this out of courtesy. At that low voice that was filled with honesty, Rachel turned to look at him with teary eyes. And asked with a strange face. Although her face was still wet at the tears, it wasn't that bad to hear.

"Why.....?"

"I'm envious of you and your husband that are remembered to be good chefs by everyone without exception, and Alan that could be together with those kind of chefs."

"Minjoon will also be able to do that soon. You will be able to meet a good chef, and learn properly below them. And personally.....I would like it if that person was me."

"Yes?"

At the sudden words, Jo Minjoon asked back with a perplexed voice. Rachel continued saying with a calm voice.

"I will also return to the kitchen in a little while. And....."

Rachel's eyes looked at Jo Minjoon fixedly. Her voice was clearer than her eyes.

"I would like it if you were in my kitchen."

Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel absentmindedly. As he heard something unexpected at an unexpected situation, he couldn't

organize his thoughts as to how to reply. Only the empty chat appeared over the monitor.

[.....I'm eating frozen pizza and watching the broadcast at the same time. But he's doing the broadcast and getting a job at the same time.]

Chapter 134: Their Live Broadcast (3)

“I.....”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth with a stunned voice but couldn't continue saying anything and just breathed. His heart beat. He felt really thankful that Rachel had made that kind of proposal to him.

Although the reason for that proposal would mostly be because of his absolute taste, Jo Minjoon didn't want to worry about that. Although he didn't have the strength Rachel believed him to have, Rachel had a strength he didn't know of. Won't he be able to reach Rachel's expectations if he worked fully? He thought like that. He wanted to.

“Emily always used to said. That if you lined up people that wanted to learn below teacher Rachel, they would surround the America and there would be some that remained.”

“Did she?”

Rachel looked at Emily. While Emily was sipping wine with an embarrassed expression, Jo Minjoon opened her mouth.

“There are people among those. People that just line up without knowing what the line is for. But there's no need for me to line up, and it's right in front of me.....Honestly, it's a really strong seduction. Even more on the point that there is no need to decline it.”

“I can understand it as agreeing, right?”

“Yes. It's a yes that doesn't need a theory.”

Rachel smiled brightly at those words and then sipped in some wine with an expression as if nothing had happened. When the surrounding people were looking at them absent mindedly by what happened, Kaya grabbed a bread and asked Minjoon.

“Congratulations for the pre employment. But.....”

Kaya hesitated a moment and covered her mic with her fist. When he looked at that, he thought of the past. What had she asked him like that? Was it ‘don’t like me’?. Kaya whispered in Jo Minjoon’s ear with a low voice.

“You see this. Can I dip it in wine?”

“It would be different by countries.....but won’t you be able to do so? I don’t think the flavor will be anything special. I think that it will be better to take a bite of the bread and drink some wine.”

“Is it.....”

Jo Minjoon was also speaking while covering his mic. How many times have people covered their mics in a live broadcast in history, Martin let out a sigh as if it was absurd and smirked.

[That bad hand came out again. They were also like that in Grand Chef....]

[What are they talking about? Doesn’t this have something like sound amplification?]

[Are they speaking some kind of secret? And then they will also say ‘we are just friends’.]

You could clearly feel the stifling of the viewers feeling just by looking at the chat. Jo Minjoon hurriedly opened his mouth.

“Ah, don’t misunderstand. She just.....”

Jo Minjoon got interrupted. Kaya extended her hand and covered Jo Minjoon’s mouth. As Jo Minjoon opened his eyes roundly, Kaya looked at him with severe eyes and while frowning. She loosened her hand, which was covering the mouth, and said.

“No. Don’t say it.”

“Why?”

“It’s embarrassing.”

[.....Just what do they talk about that it’s embarrassing?]

[At this point, isn't it a script?]

It was really fortunate that the servers appeared then. They exchanged glances and then placed down 7 plates at the same time. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth roundly. The food on the plate had quite a marvelous shape. A white and round mozzarella cheese that was swelled up like a baseball. Next to that, there were eatable flowers and herbs decorated as a grassy field. Kaya got amazed and asked.

“This.....is cheese, right?”

“Yes. We pierced a hole in the mozzarella cheese and put in minestrone soup. When time passes, it swells up like that because of the steam and heat of the soup.”

“If it's minestrone soup..... What was that?”

“It's an italian vegetable soup. We boil vegetables, pasta, rice, etc. In our case, we insist on orzo pasta. Inside the rice shaped pasta, the chicken and vegetable stock melts inside it, and the mozzarella cheese that was melted stickily will cover that. Cut it once.”

Kaya raised the knife with a flustered face as if she was slicing a birthday cake. As she cut the swelled cheese, steam surged up and the cheese slowly flowed down to the soup and the grass next to it. The smell of the cheese and the fragrance of the herbs, and the aroma of the soup that was hidden in it, harmonized and ran inside her nose.

She was trembling. And then turned to look at Jo Minjoon with an enjoying expression. Then, Jo Minjoon that was slicing the cheese with the same expression, smiled brightly at Kaya. He understood Kaya's feelings. She was someone that had never gone to a proper restaurant in her life. So she could only be excited in front of this excellent and pretty dishes that were made with effort.

‘I also wanted to take her to a three star restaurant.’

But unfortunately, he thought that it would be difficult that it was him who took her to a three star restaurant. Because it was difficult to see that from her remaining scheduled Grand Chef plans, she would never go to a three star.

Jo Minjoon put the melted cheese and the soup in his mouth inside the regret. While the clear flavor of the chicken stock was building the atmosphere of the overall flavor, the flavor of carbohydrates felt from the texture of the cheese and the chewy orzo was quite charming. Soon, Kaya let out an exclamation.

“Wow this orzo.....It’s the hidden protagonist.”

At that moment Jo Minjoon couldn’t understand what Kaya was talking about. Although the texture of the orzo was quite fresh and fun, it wasn’t as impressive as to become the protagonist. But he rather became more impressed at the stock that was making balance between the herb and the cheese. But soon, Alan smiled brightly and said.

“You realized it. That’s right. When we were composing this dish, the most difficult part was right this orzo. At first I wondered about making it with rice grains, but it was difficult because of the aroma of grains with whatever rice we used.”

“The aroma of grains wouldn’t have been the only problem. I think that the texture when you chewed would also have been a problem. Although the celery gives some crunchiness, if you cook it for long it turns soft..... But because only the orzo has the al dente texture, it gets chewed up just like the main ingredient. Ah, I know it. It’s not taken out from an already cooked soup, but every time you serve a dish you mix it with orzo bit by bit and cook it again. Right?”

Kaya said like an excited girl. Rachel looked at Kaya with an absent minded look. Although she knew that people paid attention to her..... Kaya raised her upper lip at the moment’s silence and

said.

“Leave it if that’s not it.”

“That’s..... right. It’s a bit perplexing. Although I was prepared to get my recipe exposed by Minjoon, I didn’t know that it would get done by you.”

“I imitated him. They say friends tend to get similar.”

“Not friends, but married couples.”

“.....That’s about the same. I didn’t finish primary school. Go easy on me.”

“Every time she does that I see her more pretty. Why is it?]

[Poor=pitiful=ladylike=pretty. Isn’t it this?]

[She says she’s pretending to be Minjoon, but her tongue is so sensitive it’s no joke. She certainly didn’t get the title of genius for nothing.]

Rachel raised her fork with a depressed face and looked at Kaya. Although Kaya imitated simply like imitating minjoon.....It wasn’t an easy thing to guess up to that point in that short time. The words Serguei and Jo Minjoon said, about grabbing Kaya, roamed in her ears. Rachel opened her mouth. Although it would feel a bit childish, she couldn’t hold the curiousness in her heart anymore.

“Kaya. Are you able to guess all the ingredients?”

“Mozzarella cheese, celery, squash, artichoke, carrot, radish, basil, tomato.”

At that moment Rachel gulped in some air. Looking at her eyes that was opened to the point the white part of the eyes could be seen, Kaya smirked.

“These are the things I can see with the eye.”

“Ah....”

Rachel looked at the dish with a flat face. Looking at it well, the ingredients Kaya named just now were all things you could see with your eye. Kaya slightly added.

“Well, naming the things you can’t see with the eye.....It would be pea and chickpea. But honestly, it’s weird if you can’t feel the flavor when it’s this clear. It also has chicken stock but if you can’t feel this your tongue is really bad. If I want to boast a bit.....I think that it has some lard. And I can also feel some pork fat.”

“That’s plenty amazing. You have a really good tongue.”

“.....Why can’t I differentiate that as well?”

Sera said with a depressed voice from a side. Emily smiled bitterly and patted her back.

“Even if you are an epicurean, you basically need to have a sensitive tongue for that. Although I also knew that there was pea, I didn’t know what kind it was. And this is normal.”

“Even so.....I’m jealous. For the couple to have that sensitive tongue.”

“.....We aren’t a couple?”

“I will adjust it. Pre couple.I understand. I was wrong. Don’t glare at me like that.”

[The time where you can’t name a couple, couple came.]

[It’s already been years since I didn’t call my wife, wife.]

“The chat, shut up. Please.”

[Now she also says not to chat.]

[I heard a badmouthing. Wow.....But why do I want to keep listening to it?]

“.....Perverts.”

Kaya let out a sigh and shook her head. It was then. The eyes on Jo Minjoon got fixed on the servers that were approaching.

Although he couldn't see well what was on the plate, he could clearly see the system window over it.

[Oil pasta with squid and bokchoy as garnish]

Freshness : 96%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 10/10

‘10 points with pasta.....?’

And oil pasta at that. It was a category Jo Minjoon thought that it was the most difficult to get 10 points. In oil pasta, instead of using oil for obtaining a clear flavor, it was that difficult to bring out a complex and elaborate flavor.

The plate was placed. Jo Minjoon was looking at the pasta with eyes as if he was looking at a lover that returned. The shape was quite simple. The noodle, that was finely placed, had an overall green colour. And it wasn't only because of the bok choy between the noodles. Maybe it was because they grated basil with olive oil that the colour of the oil itself was a blatant green.

At first, he was a bit perplexed because he couldn't see the squid, but looking at it well he saw that the squid was sliced as thinly as a linguine and was hidden between the noodles. But he was still confused. Because of what did this dish get 10 points, he couldn't understand it well.

It was when he sucked in some noodle while thinking like that. From the noodle that surged up like the elastic udon noodle, it wiggled inside his mouth like a nakji(낙지). It was the first time he felt this kind of elasticity when eating pasta.

And when he chewed the noodle, squid and bok choy, the emotions he felt was beyond that. It was obvious that he felt the unique aroma of squid and bok choy, but how could he feel the

sweet flavor of barley in the noodle?

On top of that, the flavor of barley didn't even play with the other ingredients. On the oil, a spicy flavor faintly heated his mouth, maybe because chili seed was placed in it and not only basil, And from the tongue and lips that became sensitive the noodles was felt so organically to the point it shocked him.

At that instant, an odd sigh was heard. At that moment Jo Minjoon thought that it was because couldn't hold in the pleasant feeling, but that wasn't it. Right next to him Kaya was chewing the noodle with a red face while closing her eyes.

‘.....Thinking about it, a 10 points dish is a first for Kaya.’

Jo Minjoon's eyes became moist. He didn't know why he felt this choked when Kaya ate her first 10 point dish. He opened his mouth. It was a voice that trembled a bit.

“Is it delicious?”

Kaya nodded while not opened her mouth and with eyes that were even teary. It was a flavor that seemed like if you opened your mouth, a cry would come out immediately. Jo Minjoon understood her. As she had a more sensitive sense of taste, the feeling she felt could only be bigger.

Jo Minjoon took out a handkerchief and wiped Kaya's eyes.

“Your make up will get messed up.”

[He's crazy.]

[I think that they are even weirder than the hollywood weirdos, with another meaning.]

[Are korean men all like that?]

[I'm a korean man, but we aren't all like that.]

Anderson was eating the pasta and then looked at Alan with a stifled face. Alan, that was looking at Jo Minjoon and Kaya with a gratified expression, turned his head. Anderson said with an

awkward voice.

“Isn’t there a digestive here? I think I got an indigestion.”

Chapter 135: Their Live Broadcast (4)

Saying to bring a digestive wasn't simply a joke. When Alan brought a digestive, Anderson didn't hesitate even a moment and brought it to his mouth.

As Rachel patted Anderson's back with a pitiful face, Anderson put a smile as if he was happy and perplexed at the same time. Rachel opened her mouth.

"Even an elder that has already sent away her husband is fine, can you already be like this?"

".....I won't put any excuses."

"Will you be able to eat?"

"I have to. There's the broadcast, and most of all, each and every one of the plates are too charming to not eat it."

Anderson was also a chef anyway. And at the same time an epicurean. He wasn't the type to be able to ignore a delicacy when it was in front of him. No. Precisely speaking, it may be right to say that he didn't want to show that side to Rachel. He wanted to show Rachel a more perfect side of him. Anderson glanced at Jo Minjoon.

I would like it if you were in my kitchen.

The words Rachel said still roamed in his ears. But what was unfortunate was that those words weren't meant for him, but for Jo Minjoon. He also wanted to hear those words. He wanted to get recognized by Rachel. And also hoped for a place for him in the kitchen.

'.....I'm not even a girl that fell in love. What am I doing right now.'

Anderson smiled bitterly while putting the pasta in his mouth. The funny thing was that even in this situation, the pasta had a

really simple and delicate flavor. It was delicious. To the point it made him forget his headache and stomachache. But of course, it wasn't that just because of that his complicated feelings got washed away, but even so, he felt a bit better.

[Anderson. Cheer up. We also understand how you feel.]

[But Anderson said that he was a celibate in the last broadcast. Do celibates don't want to see those kind of things?]

[People at his age saying that they are celibates put it up just for the concept. Don't trust him.]

“.....Why are you attacking me so suddenly. I am indeed a celibate.”

He was getting some comfort while reading the chat, but in an instant even his identity was being doubt. He now decided not to look at the chat and eat the pasta, but Sera that was next to him brought the subject.

“But why are you a celibate?”

“.....Must there be a reason?”

“Is there something in the world that doesn't have? I'm an epicurean because I like eating, and you are a cook because you like cooking. There's even a reason for that, but will there not be a reason only for the celibate thing?”

“I understand. I understood, so stop speaking that long. It's the first time I see someone speaking longer than my mom.”

Anderson shook his head as if he was tired of it. Emily looked at Anderson and put an expression as if she understood how he felt, and soon Sera turned her head and rolled the pasta in her fork naturally. Anderson said.

“I have never felt the need of a relationship. Even if others do, I don't have any thoughts of wanting to marry, and that's why i'm a celibate.”

“Ei, those are different things. Celibates live with the thought that they must stay single for life. And you just don’t have any thoughts of marrying.”

“Isn’t the results the same?”

“Are people that only eat vegetables because they can’t find the flavor of meat, and people that are vegans and don’t eat meat because of their religions, etc?”

“.....It is not.”

“Then, you also aren’t a celibate.”

As he kept listening to her, he seemed to get convinced by her. Anderson chewed the pasta and thought. Is that really it? Sera had nailed that doubt in Anderson. She whispered in a low voice in his ear. But of course, it was completely hearable to the audience because of the mic.

“If you are a celibate, there’s no need to feel ill at Minjoon and Kaya.No, actually, if they act like a pure hearted drama even if a grandfather celibate comes he will feel ill. But even so..... It’s like that?”

“I understand. But why is me being a celibate or not important? Why are you trying to convince me this earnestly?”

“It’s unfortunate that a charming man like Anderson lives on while thinking that he’s a celibate. I’m releasing a good fish from it’s captivity for the girls around the world.”

Anderson just opened and closed his mouth trying to say something but in the end, he started to blush and turned his head. Even he was defenseless at this kind of direct compliment. Kaya saw that and clicked her tongue.

“Anderson. Concentrate. We are broadcasting right now. Try having a relationship when the cameras are off.”

At Kaya’s pitiful eyes, Anderson looked at her with a stupefied

face. And he looked at Jo Minjoon asking if he also thought like that. But Jo Minjoon chose to look at Alan rather than answer Anderson's sight.

“Alan. Just who made this pasta? The oil was good and the combination of squid and bok choy was also good, but I think that the most important thing are the noodles. Not exaggerating at all, this is the best pasta I tried until now.”

“Your evaluation is good. You make me expect for nothing. Can I ask you the score of it?”

“If it was normal I would have felt sorry answering it..... But I will be able to answer for this one without even a bit of hesitation. It's a 10. It's perfect.”

“Ku, I did it!”

Emily couldn't hide his smile and clenched his fists. Although epicureans with more experience and years than him have complimented him, but Jo Minjoon's compliment had a different meaning than theirs. It meant that his dish was perfectly balanced. For a chef, he could only feel proud.

[10 points.....Who did Jo Minjoon give a 10 until now.]

[For what was broadcasted until now, it may be on Rose Island of Chicago. Was it calf cheek meat with fried anchovies? It would probably be that.]

[Calf cheek... The explanation is kind of terrible.]

[But this composition is fun. At Grand Chef Alan was the one judging and Minjoon getting evaluated. But now, their roles shifted.]

[It would also be fun if Minjoon becomes a judge for Grand Chef.]

“For the pasta.....Actually, it wasn't made by me. There's someone providing us noodles for our restaurant. He's someone that has made noodles every day for tens of years. So compared to

the industrial noodles, the quality can only be different.”

“It certainly is like that.”

“Just like you have to be connected to a good patissier if you want to run a restaurant in France, in Italy there’s no strongest weapon as the relationship with an excellent noodle maker. There will at least be one master making pasta themselves every day in each town, and that’s the reason this country makes it a pasta suzerain state. And I state positively about the pasta maker. He’s one of the best masters in Italy. ANd so that means that he’s also one of the best in the world.”

Those were words that made you think of a lot of things. The relationship with a good pasta maker and a patissier is important. The more you knew, a restaurant was something you needed quite a lot of people. Thinking about finding those relations, it became an adventurer going on a long journey. Fear and curiousness inside of that. Those things made Jo Minjoon feel flustered.

He sensed that he was alive. He could place down everything and participate in Grand Chef because he wanted to walk this road. And this path that felt to be so far away from him was in front of Jo Minjoon’s feet. No, Behind his feet. Because he was already walking in it. The path to become a chef.

The dishes kept coming out. It started with a risotto and roasted moon fish, T-bone steak cooked in medium rare with 5 kinds of dressing sauces and 6 kinds of salt. Pizza and followed by cherry jelly covered with white chocolate.

The risotto and moon fish were 9 points, and the rest were 8 but..... was it because of the shock of the pasta? The only thing that remained in his head was that smooth and elastic pasta. And that also seemed to be the case for Kaya. She looked at Alan and urged.

“Can’t you give us some more of that linguine we ate?”

“.....But you finished your meal?”

“Even so. Honestly, does it make sense giving us only a little bit of something that delicious and tell us to stop?”

“Fine. Come to the kitchen after the broadcast ends.”

“.....Can I also go?”

“Minjoon too..... Everyone who wants to come can do it. I will specially make it myself.”

[A rule breaker with several meanings.]

[But I do agree with those words. When you go to a restaurant they always give you a lot of the non delicious things, and only a pinch of the delicious thing.]

[I also want to eat pasta in Italy. Restaurants nowadays are just too salty. And there are even cases where I feel a bitter flavor on a tomato spaghetti. For cream spaghetti, the noodle is always sticky and I can't differentiate if it's pasta dough.....]

Martin just watched the viewers chat among themselves. The number of viewers started to increase and now it approached 310.000. It was quite a fine level. No, a really good one. But of course, compared to a live sports in internet it isn't much, but wasn't this a simple tasting broadcast?

The important point was that the viewers didn't get out easily. And Martin thought that the biggest reason was in Kaya.

‘No, precisely speaking is it Minjoon and Kaya?’

The two had quite an interesting fandom. Of course, the two separately have their own fans, but when they were together, the reactions of the viewers changed drastically.

It was what he felt in Grand Chef. When Jo Minjoon and Kaya were separated but they still appeared on the screen the number of viewers didn't increase, but when they were together speaking or doing something else the number of viewers increased to at least

tens of thousands, and even hundred thousands.

‘If only Kaya hadn’t won, I would have brought the two of them.’

Martin smacked his lips as if it was regrettable. And at that moment, Rachel was also feeling some regret. Precisely speaking, saying that it was closer to greed was right. Kaya’s genius side was so strong she felt regret on why she hadn’t seen it until now. To the point that if Jo Minjoon didn’t exist, her eyes would only go over her.

‘If I can take the two of them.....’

But Kaya was more picky than Jo Minjoon. Rather than she herself was like that, the situation was like that. Because for now Kaya had to work for Grand Chef for a few more months. Jeremy coughed with an ahem.

“Your eyes are full of ambition. If you aged, isn’t it time to feel more relaxed?”

“It seems like you did age. I didn’t yet.”

“How much of a difference do we have.....Anyways, I will say it as you don’t seem able to. Kaya. It seems like this friend wants you a lot. Do you have any thoughts?”

“Thoughts?”

It was an unexpected offer, but at that moment Kaya thought seriously. It was clear what Jeremy was talking about. The first thing she thought was ‘if I go there I will be able to see Minjoon everyday’. She herself felt dumbfounded for thinking about that first, but what would you do? But after a while, Kaya’s expression contorted. The chat inside the screen was getting on her nerves.

“Ah, i’m not pretending to think! To obviously go because of Minjoon, I’m not that stupid!”

“.....Let’s listen to your answer later.”

Rachel smiled embarrassedly and turned the subject. Kaya glared

at the screen while breathing hard and then sat on her seat with a sulky face. Sera whispered in Emily's voice in a low voice.

“I think that Kaya's temperament is hotter than mine.”

“.....May be.”

The live broadcast was soon coming to an end. As the meal had ended, the broadcast could only do so as well. It was the moment the broadcast ended with a simple announcement. The last chat clearly remained above the screen.

[Kaya♥Minjoon]

“.....Why are people so childish?”

Kaya said with a trembling voice. Although even she hadn't lived maturely, the people in the internet seemed more childish than what she thought. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly. For the last thing to remain to be that strange thing. Well, the contents about the chat were mostly about them to the point it was unavoidable. Anderson said while stroking his belly as if he was still feeling sick.

“You can just start dating you stupid people.”

Chapter 136: What A Kitchen Is (1)

“Anderson, until when are you planning to act like a child? Grow up please, grow up.”

‘.....It’s not something I would like to hear from someone who dates in the middle of a broadcast.’ Anderson looked at Kaya with a weird face but he just shut his mouth and turned around. He didn’t want to get caught in the same weird screen as her.

As Anderson didn’t answer back, Kaya put on a proud face thinking that she had won. And Jo minjoon looked at that Kaya and laughed silently. For Anderson, she would be detestable, but in his eyes she was just pretty. Jo Minjoon unconsciously extended his arm and tangled Kaya’s hair. Kaya frowned and glared at him.

“Ah, what is it. Don’t touch my hair.”

“It was weird. I fixed it for you.”

“Weird my! Wha, it got disheveled.And he was the one that told me to not keep my hair disheveled.”

Kaya grumbled and checked her hair. It was certainly a look that was difficult to see in the past. It wasn’t that she didn’t care for her looks, but even so compared to the girls at her age she certainly decorated less. Indeed, why would she keep doing that weird smokey makeup every day? But of course, by now that became her character.

“What if customers wish for you to have your smokey makeup in the kitchen?”

“They won’t even be able to see me in the kitchen anyways.”

“Nowadays, an open kitchen is the trend. Ah, right. Teacher Rachel, is the main Rose Island an open kitchen?”

“Yes. Daniel wished to see the faces of the customers even while on the kitchen. Eating and enjoying it, and at times complaining,

he wanted to see all of that. He dreamt of becoming a chef that didn't want to only manage the kitchen, but also the hall."

He felt that he knew what Rachel was talking about. Jo Minjoon turned to look back at Kaya. Kaya had her back bent and fixing her hair on the reflection of the camera lens and then turned her head.

".....Why?"

"No, I was just curious. Do you like an open kitchen? Or do you prefer not being seen from the hall?"

'.....He always asks her.' Anderson grumbled inwardly. If they were still broadcasting, the chat would probably say this. [Are they wondering what kind of restaurant they should make together?]. It was when he was trying to erase those words that seemed to be floating in front of his eyes. Kaya thought for a moment and then let out a groan as if it was difficult.

"Mm.....I don't know. I think that it would be fun looking at customers eating but, maybe I will get tired of it after looking at them everyday. And I think that it's also burdensome having all eyes on me."

"I think that's reasonable. Just looking over there....."

Jo Minjoon pointed one side. Kaya saw the direction Jo Minjoon pointed at and then put a stifled expression. On a side of the hall, an open kitchen was showing itself. It wasn't particularly busy. Most of the chefs were on their places, and only the people who seemed to be the juniors were moving busily here and there and giving them ingredients.

If I get to stand on that place..... Honestly speaking, I would be able to endure one or two times but I think that the mental exhaustion would be great. There weren't many customers looking at them, and most of them just looked at them for a moment and then concentrated again on the food. But even so, the chefs standing on the kitchen could only be wary of the sights that

weren't even on them and get nervous.

Kaya shook her head. Maybe she was really taking treatment, but her waving hair seemed to be that of an Egypt princess.

"Oh, I certainly am not fit to be exposed at the sights of people."

"There won't be a day that people won't look at you."

".....And you?"

At that moment, Jo Minjoon could only get confused at that short question. If you are also going to keep looking at me, or if you will also have that many sights in you. It seemed simple, but it was actually a problem you couldn't answer easily.

But fortunately, he didn't need to answer that question. Alan coughed and opened his mouth.

"Let's go to the kitchen now. You said you wanted to eat more pasta before, right?"

"Ah, yes."

"Actually, I was dying to know what would get the best score, but as it became just like I expected I feel relief and sorrow at the same time. I thought that I had to gain some points with pasta because it is Italy, but if you are a chef you also have the greed to get out of the prejudice of a country."

"If making an excellent pasta is a prejudice, then that is a good one."

"I know. I was just saying."

Alan replied with a soft voice. When he was a judge he always acted strict, so you felt some kind of distance with him. But as you met him as a chef and a customer it became more comfortable as a person.

As they entered the kitchen, a girl chef that had a childish face came running towards Alan and stood in front of him. Alan shook his head. A rough Italian came out of his mouth.

“Berta. Don’t come and stay in your place. I will take care of here.”

“Ah.....May I bring you something?”

“Didn’t you listen that I was going to take care of here?”

Alan said with a cold voice. Kaya whispered in Jo Minjoon’s ear. “It makes me remember the old times.” Jo Minjoon shook his head and said. “I think it’s worse.” Maybe it was because they were people from his kitchen that his attitude on treating them was fiercer and scarier. But even so the young girl chef didn’t move easily. Was she the same age as Kaya. Berta, that had a dense brown hair, glanced at Kaya. It was when Alan frowned. Emily placed her hand on Alan’s shoulder and said.

“It seems like she has something to say to Kaya? Give her some time, Alan.”

“.....Berta. If you have something you want to say, do it quickly and go back.”

“Ye, yes!”

Berta nodded with a really nervous face. Even if she had almost the same age as Kaya, her spirit was certainly weaker. First, she was half a head shorter than Kaya. Maybe it was because she was shorter than Chloe. She trembling seemed to be just like a bunny. She opened her mouth. Her english wasn’t that fluent, but there was no problem on understanding her.

“I also, uh.....just graduated from secondary school. Although I don’t have a talent that’s as amazing as yours, uh.....even so, I want to become like you. You are my..... you know. Ah, role model. You are my role model.”

“.....Uh, thanks.”

“You two suit each other well! Excuse me.”

Berta looked at Jo Minjoon and Kaya and after speaking like that

she escaped to the kitchen as if she was embarrassed. Jo Minjoon and Kaya looked at each other with awkward smiles. Kaya opened her mouth.

“If it was a live broadcast they would have teased us again, right?”

“Even if it isn’t, in the end we will still get teased when it gets broadcasted. Martin. Are you going to edit this?”

“I have to.”

At the unexpected answer, Jo Minjoon opened his eyes roundly and looked at him. Martin soon said with a simmering smile.

“With more impact.”

“See. He’s like that.”

“.....That slave for viewers.”

“My bonus depends on the number of viewers.”

“Martin always said that he felt grateful that thanks to us the number of viewers increased. If you received a bonus with those viewers, why don’t you buy us something delicious?”

“Martin always said that he felt grateful since the number of viewers increased because of us.”

“Aren’t I buying you now?”

“.....You are buying this with the production fees!”

Martin didn’t answer and just feigned ignorance. Jo Minjoon patted Kaya’s shoulders and said.

“Don’t throw a tantrum. If I think you became an adult, you act like a child and vice versa. Why are you like this?”

“Girls have times when they want to become kids. And times when they want to be adults.”

“You are also going to act as a woman in front of Martin?”

“Why? You want me to only do it to you?”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon got at a loss for words. It seems like Kaya also knew that the level of what she said was quite high. Jo Minjoon turned his head, and Kaya also flushed and just looked at the floor. Alan, that just finished the pasta, saw them and nodded as if he understood.

“It seems like they filmed a movie once again. What’s the genre?”

“I wonder. Passionate melo?”

“I hope for the day they film an action movie.”

“You don’t know. They may film an adult drama first.”

Emily smiled brightly and said. Jo Minjoon thought that Emily felt better than usual. But of course, she always had a clear temperament, but today it was even more. ‘Is it because of Alan?’ He couldn’t help but think like that. Because every time she looked at Alan, Emily forced to put on a prettier smile than usual. Jo Minjoon said.

“Sera. Doesn’t Emily seem happier than usual?”

“Uh.....Ah, certainly seems so. What would be the reason?”

Sera put on a confused face for a moment and then said while laughing as if she noticed Jo Minjoon’s look. Emily flushed. Alan served the pasta on a dish as if he was pretending not to care the words of Sera.

“It’s the ideal al dente state Italian residents think of. It will be more delicious than what you ate on the table. Because I made it myself.”

“.....Alan. Do you know that your image from Grand Chef crumbled quite a lot?”

“Because this isn’t Grand Chef.”

As Kaya spoke as she couldn’t get accustomed, Alan replied with a calm voice. Jo Minjoon chose to put the pasta on his mouth

rather than pay attention to their conversation. Normally, if it was the same dish, even if you ate it after some weeks you had to feel less moved.

But amazingly enough, he didn't feel that at all. Although oil pasta was originally a dish you didn't get tired of, was it because of the charm only 10-point dishes had? However much he ate, the deliciousness of the noodles didn't lessen at all. As even Rachel and Jeremy were just eating the pasta like that, how would the flavor be. Rachel smiled with a proud face.

“Alan. You grew a lot. And you also found a really good noodle maker.”

“Ah, that..... It's someone teacher also knows.”

“Me?”

“Yes. It's been a while.”

The answer came from the back of the staff. And the staff also turned to look back as if they were surprised at the sudden voice. An old man with gray hair and trained wrists was looking at Rachel. Rachel, that frowned a bit to take focus, soon said with a surprised voice.

“Alfredo?”

“You also aged quite a bit.”

“You were living here?”

“I'm the one who should do the questions. The one that retired for 10 years isn't me, but you.”

“.....That's also right.”

The old man wasn't speaking in Italian but in English, and in a natural english you could find from a native at that. Because of that, there were no problems listening to their conversation. Obviously, eyes filled with doubts were directed at her, and Rachel turned back to those sights and spoke with a voice that was wet in

memories.

The old man wasn't speaking in Italian but in English, in a way a native speaker would speak English.

“Alfredo is the noodle maker that provided us with pasta when we first opened a restaurant in Venice.”

“And the noodle you are eating right now was also made by me.”

Alfredo spoke with a voice filled with confidence. Jo Minjoon looked at the old man with a surprised look.

[Alfredo Argento.]

Cooking Level : 6

Baking Level : 6

Tasting Level : 8

Decoration Level : 4

The levels weren't that amazing for making noodles. But of course, making noodles was also a technique that couldn't be measured with cooking or baking. Jo Minjoon looked at Alan.

“Alan, may I be able to look at the uncooked state of the pasta?”

“Ah, it's here.”

Alan immediately took out some pasta in the cupboard. Jo Minjoon just looked at that linguine. There was the aroma of the linguine on the side of it, and the texture of it was also quite soft. The cooking score was 7. Just the noodle itself, that wasn't anything had 7 points. Jo Minjoon knew really well what meaning that had.

Jo Minjoon ate on the noodle without any hesitation. And at that moment, Alan smirked and said to Alfredo.

“Be careful. That friend got famous for having an absolute sense of taste. Perhaps, he may grasp of the know hows of Mr. Alfredo.”

“Huhu, my life isn't that light to be able to be grasped in just a

few bites. They are noodles I have put my entire life on. I made it by checking the temperature, humidity, the temperature of my own body and salt. Even if his taste is sensitive, he won't be able to read off that hard work."

Alfredo was confident. Jo Minjoon, that just gulped down the noodle without any words, slightly rolled his eyes. And at the end of it he saw a familiar window.

[You have grasped the noodle(linguine) making recipe of Alfredo!]

Chapter 137: What A Kitchen Is (2)

A sense of corruption after stealing from someone had surged up, but it was quite an enjoyable one. Of course, there may be some flaws because of that, but what could he do? He had that kind of ability. Alfredo trusted that he wouldn't be able to grasp the recipe even if he ate it, and he was just wrong about that. It was more comfortable thinking like that.

But of course, it wasn't that he could perfectly reproduce everything just because he knew the recipe. Because Alfredo's pasta making wasn't something that could be copied just by getting the right temperature and the ratio. The strength you use on pressing the dough, times, and angle... if you could copy all of those things, then you would be at the level that it became your own recipe.

"How is it Minjoon. Do you think you know?"

"I think that saying that I know and I don't will be uncomfortable."

"Haha, looking that you are speaking for longer it seems like you couldn't grasp the recipe."

"Well, I can tell you the ratio of the dough..... But I think that, that by itself is not anything special."

"You got it right immediately. The basics are the best path. Think about climbing a mountain. You have a mountain road fixed, but is there a need to choose another road? But anyways, you are still impressive. People normally think that there was something special in it."

Jo Minjoon just answered with a smile. Kaya swept off Jo Minjoon's shoulders and said with a proud face.

"You did well."

"That was the basics."

It seemed that now everyone else were tired to even react. Anderson looked at Alfredo and said.

“But how many noodles do you make per day? As I’ve seen, it doesn’t look like you only make linguine.”

“I do make many kinds, but the most popular one is certainly the linguine. Followed by that, there are the spaghetti, fettuccine, tagliatelle, etc.....and I get a bit behind on pasta like fusilli, short lasagna, and stuffed pasta. Ah but just because of that it doesn’t mean that it’s not delicious or unpopular. Just that the long pasta in our house is the most recognized globally..... There were quite a few customers that think about stupid things like ordering pasta that’s not the long kind in our restaurant.”

Alfredo even released information they didn’t ask about. Looking at his arrogant expression and high shoulders, Jo Minjoon laughed. He thought that a master talked less and had a lot of weight in their words, but he rather felt that this look was kind of fresh. He opened his mouth.

“Will it be fine if I copy your recipe just like it is?”

“Ha, if you can do it, do so. To make a good pasta, you have to first have good wrists. Can a man have that thickness? Your girlfriend next to you is unfortunate.” (Looool)

“.....Girlfriend?”

“Ah, wasn’t the person next to you your girlfriend? I thought that you were as you were too close to each other.”

Alfredo said with a natural face. Kaya coughed and moved one step away from Jo Minjoon after taking her shoulder away from Jo Minjoon’s. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Anyways, the linguine was delicious. It was the most delicious one I ate until now. Thank you for making me feel that I really came to Italy.”

“Why the thanks?”

In Jo Minjoon's position, he was really grateful. It was the first perfect pasta he ate in his life. But of course, Alan that cooked that or precisely speaking the role of his kitchen had a big role.....but Jo Minjoon thought that the biggest participant in this was Alfredo. Because it would have been impossible without his pasta.

‘Will I be able to copy it?’

He had perfectly grasped the conditions. In what situation he had to massage the pasta, the system told him everything. The problem was if he was able to copy it or not. He didn't think about doing it right now at all. But won't he be able to do it after years of constant practice.....He thought like that. Although it was quite an optimistic thought, what could he do that he felt fluttered.

From one step behind him, Sera was looking at Jo Minjoon with soft eyes. Honestly speaking, she also felt that the pasta was really delicious and perfect..... But was it because she wasn't a chef? She didn't expect that it was so amazing to be a 10-point dish.

On top of that, it was also obvious that she couldn't guess the basic ingredients that was put in the dough. She thought that there would be something special in it, and if that wasn't the case it would be impossible to bring that flavor. When she thought that that was the difference of the tongues you were born with and was a wall you couldn't overcome, she felt poor regardless of Emily's advice. Sera opened her mouth.

“Emily. You really are amazing.”

“Why are you suddenly like this? It's scary.”

“You would have guessed all of these situations the first time you saw Minjoon's absolute taste. And understood the meaning it had immediately. I'm barely starting to get a grasp on what that was..... This is much more amazing than what I have thought.”

“The amount of viewers didn't increase for nothing when his absolute taste got exposed. Although the reason he's more famous

than previous winners may be because of the romance with Kaya, but his tongue is the biggest reason. Just like I said.....”

“I know. If you are greedy on what you can’t have, only your stomach hurts, and our tasting world has a meaning of our own.”

Emily looked at Sera that had her mouth open and then shut her mouth and rolled her eyes upwards. Sera slightly looked at Anderson.

“Anderson will also feel his chest burning. It’s difficult for a friend that’s next to him to be that outstanding.”

“Is it.....?”

“Yeah. That’s right. Just by thinking of chasing him, your shoulders get heavy.”

Sera talked like that and glanced at Emily. But Emily was busy looking at Anderson, so she couldn’t notice her gaze. Perhaps, the cameraman would have recorded all of that, but it would be a while when Emily sees that scene on the broadcast.

But Rachel listened to their conversation. And what picked on her ear the most was the thing about Anderson. Thinking about that, Rachel had just told Jo Minjoon that she would like him on her kitchen, but she had never said something like that to Anderson, who always expressed his goodwill towards her.

What she had picked up mostly was the thing about Anderson.

‘Am I too emotionless?’

She couldn’t treat everyone that expressed her goodwill with goodwill. Because there were countless people in the world that showed a smile to her. The only thing she could pay them back with was only a smile.

But she did feel bitter when she saw that back of Anderson. There was the thing that he was the son of her acquaintances, and that the goodwill Anderson expressed was quite transparent compared

to the others also made her heart boil. While she was looking at Anderson thinking like that, Jeremy smiled slyly and said.

“Why. Are you thinking of changing horses?”

“.....How many more times do I have to tell you about speaking a language that’s suitable to your age?”

“I wonder. Until you get exhausted of doing that?”

“Even when you are about to die, you aren’t saying anything about fixing it. They are still children. Stop speaking of them as if they are kitchen tools.”

“Kitchen tools? I’m not even a chef now, so why will I do that? Rather, you would be the one to do that. I still don’t know what kind of greed you want to satiate with having Minjoon, that friend. Is it simply the resurrection of Rose Island’s main store? No, is that really your true objective?”

“What are you trying to say.”

“I do have something I want to say, but I don’t think I should say it in front of the camera.”

Rachel glared at Jeremy for a moment and then opened her mouth. However, she didn’t curse him or badmouth him. Maybe Anderson felt the atmosphere between them that he approached and said.

“Mister Jeremy. Are you bullying my teacher again?”

“Hoho, I’m not even a mischievous primary school kid so why would I do that?”

“I wonder. Even if you aren’t a kid, you still are mischievous.”

“Damn it. Busted.”

Jeremy put on an excessive surprised face. And Anderson let out a sigh at that. While they were like this, Jo Minjoon kept looking every corner on the kitchen. Was it because of Alan and the camera that the chefs were grabbing their pans with more nervous

expressions? Alan said with a calm voice.

“Just like I told you before, I really wanted to bring you to this kitchen. Do you remember the day your absolute taste got exposed?”

“It was a day difficult to forget. For me and for other people.”

“Then, Emily proposed you to become an epicurean. And I told you not to get shaken at that seduction.”

Emily turned her head as if she felt her name being called. Alan lowered his voice with a flinched expression. He said as if he was almost whispering. It was a voice so low only Jo Minjoon and Kaya, that was next to him, could listen to.

“Back then you told me that you wouldn’t get shaken because of the happiness cooking gives. And I told you that the rough path of a chef would make you tired.”

“You did.”

“Yet..... I hope that you haven’t changed your opinion about that yet. This program. Even if it’s hard, it will still be sweet compared to a kitchen. If you worked under teacher Rachel, you wouldn’t have difficult days because you don’t have customers.....But just because of that, it won’t be as sweet as now. It won’t be a sweet time, but a salty time. I hope that even if a saltier food enters your mouth.....You don’t spit it.”

“Um.”

At Alan’s long speech, Kaya butted in. She said with an expression as if she had chewed on a sour grape.

“Just why are you ignoring Minjoon like this?”

“I’m not ignoring him. Kaya. I’m trying to block him from crumbling because of the distance from reality and his fantasy.....”

“That’s why you are saying he’s going to lose because of that distance. That won’t be happening. Minjoon will never leave the

kitchen.”

“.....Just why do you think like that?”

“Minjoon also withstood me.”

Kaya said with a voice that seemed as if she was a bit angry. No, she was actually angry. She knew that Alan was saying this for Minjoon’s sake, but even so she didn’t like that he was being treated as if he was even a bit weak.

“He even withstood a complex and spoiled girl like me, but do you think he won’t be able to withstand a mere kitchen? Minjoon will never do that. He has more determination than what you think, more patience, and looks more manly. He won’t flee on the path he chose himself.”

“Kaya.”

Alan cut her words with a calm voice. He smacked his lips as if he was hesitating for a moment and then said with a low voice.

“I escaped. Once. From the kitchen.”

Normally, the weight in his words would make you able to listen to it. But Kaya seemed to prove that Jo Minjoon wasn’t weak at all. She looked at Minjoon with unfair eyes as if she was about to cry.

“Hey, why aren’t you saying anything.”

“Alan can worry about me. Don’t act like that.”

“.....Does he mean that, you can stop cooking?”

“It doesn’t mean that. He’s like that to tell me not to stop even if it’s difficult.”

“You aren’t like that.”

Kaya said stubbornly. While she was pouting, the wrinkles in her lips shone, perhaps because of the lip gloss or because it was originally moist.

“You didn’t lie to me. Not even once.”

“.....There’s no reason to lie.”

“And you told me that you wanted to run a restaurant. That you wanted to cook forever, you told me like that.”

Kaya took in a deep breath as if she was sniveling.

“Those words, don’t make it a lie.”

Chapter 138: What A Kitchen Is (3)

Those were childish words. But maybe it was because the intention behind her words were too pretty and nice that he didn't dislike those childish words that much. However, it was also true that Alan's words were nice. Jo Minjoon said in a calm voice.

Maybe the intention behind her words were too nice that he didn't dislike the childish words that much.

"I didn't lie. And I won't give up on cooking. Alan, I promise you that I won't stop until the day I own the best restaurant, so don't worry."

".... ..Now that you speak like that, I do get a bit more relaxed."

"But what were you talking about back then? That you fled from the kitchen."

"When do you think it's from?"

Alan smiled softly and asked back. Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts for a moment and then opened his mouth.

"Isn't it certainly from when you learned below Rachel for the first time?"

"No. It's the opposite. I had hope back then that when I became a demi chef, a sous chef, a head chef, the story would become different. This suffering would end, and I will be able to handle the kitchen with joy as if it was mine."

". ...That wasn't the case?"

Jo Minjoon asked back with a face he couldn't understand well. Alan smiled brightly and turned to look at Rachel. Rachel was looking at Alan with an expression you couldn't know the meaning of. While facing that face, Alan slowly thought up of the memories in his heart.

"Hope is a step you should make in front of you. Just like I said

when I was a demi chef, a sous chef..... ..looking over that made my heart feel calmer. The reason I have it hard right now is because I 'm just a person from below. Something would change when I become a head chef. And.....”

Alan clicked his tongue and shrugged his shoulders. And after that, he let out a clear sigh and said with a composed voice.

“When I became a head chef, I realized that it isn’t the most comfortable place, but the place you hold the most responsibilities in your shoulders. You would have seen it many times on the internet. The look of a head chef yelling towards the kitchen like a crazy person. What do you think about this?”

“Isn’t their temperament just bad?”

Kaya said with a confused voice. If perhaps there was someone yelling at her like that, she wasn’t that confident on being able to fight back. Anderson butted in.

“There are many cases where their temperaments are bad, but the temperament isn’t the only thing that helps on making that harsh atmosphere.”

“Right. You would have to work while getting a hold of yourself. But there’s no need to yell like that.

Well, it’s not that I feel bad about that. Honestly speaking, I’m determined to start biting like a hyena when I become a head chef, because of my temperament.”

“.....You are already determined to do that?”

“It was quite an easy resolution. That’s why I got ready first. What, can’t I?”

At Kaya’s natural answer, Anderson couldn’t speak anything else and put on a dumbfounded expression. Kaya’s brows twitched like a wave and then glanced at Jo Minjoon. But Jo Minjoon’s eyes were directed at Alan. He opened his mouth.

“I think I kind of know what you mean. That because of the burden of being a head chef and having to lead the kitchen, you just spend a day which you yell like that, right? And that there’s no way you will feel relaxed.”

“It’s similar. But that’s not the only thing. Being a chef means that you will also mind about the reputation and sales of the restaurant. You have to develop new menus, show a flavor that’s testing but not too excessive, and at the same time, dishes that won’t disappoint the hopes of the regular customers.”

Alan let out a sigh and shook his head.

“Honestly speaking, I still have it difficult. People I know tell me what’s there to worry when I already have a two star but.... ..I still can’t get accustomed to this burden. Each and every day is war. Is the kitchen fine? Did they bring the ingredients like usual? Are there no complains by the customers? And if there are, was there a problem on my dish, or was that customer too picky? You start to get a lot of thoughtsand the more it becomes the more your head hurts.”

“I can’t say that I know it all but....I think I do understand what you meant.”

He remembered the words Rachel said, that cooking was still difficult. Rachel was like that, so how would Alan be? On whatever it is, it was natural to become harder the deeper you go. Wasn’t the ground like that? Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. There was a big possibility for him to work with Rachel when the broadcast ended. That meant he wouldn’t have a lot of time to meet other chefs.

So if that was the case, he wanted to obtain all the information he could. Of course, Rachel would teach him a lot of things, but he believed that there would be things only Alan knew. Alan continued speaking.

“In the end, the hardest thing is your mentality. Employees get stressed because of their boss or the store, but we get that from our

customers. What's ironic is that the customers are the one that bothers a chef the most.... ..But the person a chef loves the most and receives the most love is from a customer."

"Won't it be better to not think of jerks as customers?"

"Do you think jerks are jerks from the start? A customer that always left good words and a smile left the restaurant with a stiff expression after eating one day. And after that he didn't return. Later on, you realize that he wrote all of the disappointments he had about the restaurant on his blog. It's the biggest scar a chef has to face. Compared to the person that lost their lover, that sense of loss won't be small."

How long would have passed that he became able to say those words out of his mouth. The atmosphere became heavy. Alan clapped his hands.

"But of course, this is just talking about the dark side. Just like complaints come, smiles and compliments will also follow you back. And the consolation and happiness that gives you will be big.

But, even if you are happy, you may get a disease because of an attack that entered instantly. And to not get that disease, you shouldn't be frail. Minjoon. Anderson. Kaya. Are you weak or are you strong?"

No one could say that they were strong. People are like that. Even if there are many that pretend they are strong, you wouldn't be able to find real strong people even if you looked for them. But of course, there may be some that imagined that they were strong, but the three of them didn't know themselves to that point.

It was then that Martin slightly glanced towards Alan. Alan closed and opened his eyes lightly and then opened his mouth.

"If you don't know, won't you do a test?"

"A test?"

"Stand in my kitchen."

Alan pointed at the pasta that was disappearing.

“The recipe of that pasta, I will teach you the most I can before night comes. Are you confident on proving yourselves to the night customers?”

“Prove what?”

Kaya asked back with an uneasy voice. Alan replied with a serious voice.

“That you are chefs.”It had been a while since he wore a cooking uniform again, but it wasn’t unfamiliar at all. He was borrowing it from someone else, but it was still like that. Jo Minjoon liked that part of himself. Not feeling unfamiliar to the uniform was because his mentality became similar to a chef’s, he got that thought. But of course, it was a childish thought..... ..Kaya opened her mouth.

“I wore it after a long time, but it’s not unfamiliar at all. Is my soul also that of a chef’s? What, Minjoon? Why are you looking at me with those eyes?”

“Just so.”

Jo Minjoon turned his head with an awkward expression. Anderson said with an annoyed face.

“Don’t play like this when you are cooking. I will pour salt on you.”

“Do I look like a kid who doesn’t even know how to differentiate a work place?”

Anderson shut his mouth as if there was no need to even answer. Kitchen. It was between dinner and lunch, so Alan and the chefs were catching their breaths and resting. But of course, that was an exception for the low ranked chefs. Three people were still stirring the pot that had soup, sauce, etc. in one kitchen table, and the others were looking at these three with interesting eyes.

“We will be able to take one countertop each. At least for now.”

It was when Jo Minjoon mumbled like that. Martin and Alan approached them. Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings and their back and said.

“Where did the others go?”

“They left to explore the street food of Florencia.”

“And we just practice cooking here?”

“Why. You don’t like it?”

“No. It’s not that....

Even if Florencia’s dishes were delicious, in front of the opportunity of being able to feel the air of Alan’s kitchen with your body, it was nothing at all. Martin opened his mouth.

“We are planning to put some competition between you for the sake of the fun of the program and the limited space of the kitchen.”

“A competition?”

“The person that makes the most delicious olive linguine among you three will work as the demi chef in charge of the section of pasta. And the other two will work as their helper.”

Kaya, Anderson, and Jo Minjoon looked at each other awarely. There were many times that they competed each other as team leaders and team members, but this time it was a helper. For them that were none other than friends and comrades, they could only dislike it more.

Kaya said with a voice filled with motivation.

“Fine. Then, tell us the recipe.” “You grate basil, put it on the olive oil, and then fry garlic on that oil. Slice some bok choy and squid, and put it on the oil. After flambeing with white wine, you fry it once again and place salt on it. Cook the linguine for about 7 minutes and then fry it while it’s still a bit wet.”

Jo Minjoon organized the recipe Alan said. And after a while, he

said with a perplexed face.

“Is it The end?”

“Yes.”

Alan said with a confident voice. And because of that, Jo Minjoon could get all the more perplexed.

Because the expected cooking score he was seeing was showing a ‘9’.

‘What is it?’

But of course, if his skills worked as a support to raise the flavor to a limit, it wasn’t impossible to bring a higher score than the recipe. But just like it implied, it only wasn’t impossible.

The cooking level of the sous chef in charge of the pasta section in the kitchen only had a level of 7. It was almost impossible to cook a 9 points dish as a 10 points one. Even if it was Jo Minjoon, it wasn’t easy to make a 7 points dish with a 6 points recipe.

Then, the answer was in one of the two. Alan told them a wrong recipe or he didn’t tell them a part on purpose.

‘Is he telling us to find the lacking point in the recipe and fill it up ourselves

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes. Even if he composed the recipe in his head countless of times, he couldn’t get an answer at all. For now, he could only make it.

The three stood in front of their countertops and cooked the linguine. The knives trimming the vegetables were different. Kaya was rough and splendid, Anderson was quick and careful, and Jo Minjoon was calm and tidy.

The olive oil with grated basil emanated a nice aroma that heated their bodies and squid and bok choy was placed over that. As white wine was poured, flames with a dense color surged up and soon the cooked linguine fell on top of that.

Jo Minjoon, who took out the noodles before it dried up, placed the linguine on the plate beautifully.

The bok choy and squid were placed next to the pasta, finely. At least externally, it looked exactly the same as the pasta he ate before. But Jo Minjoon could see with his eyes that the score of the dish was 9.

There was nothing to feel happy because it was a 9-point dish he couldn't usually see. Because the secret for that score wasn't on his skills but on the noodles. Jo Minjoon slowly rolled the pasta in his fork. It was delicious. The deliciousness of the noodle, the elasticity, and the aroma of the squid and bok choy was vivid. But something was regrettable. Alan, who was glancing at Jo Minjoon, opened his mouth. "Do you think you recreated it the same way?"

"..... ..No. Something's lacking."

"Really?"

Alan looked at Jo Minjoon with a face that was holding his laughter. And after seeing that face, he was now completely certain that there was something missing on the recipe. Jo Minjoon went to the other two and asked.

"Can I eat it?"

"If you also let me eat yours."

"Let's change."

Jo Minjoon changed dishes. Kaya's and Anderson's linguine wasn't that different. The ingredients, and the recipe were the same, so it could only be like that. Although there was a minuscule difference on the flavor.....it wasn't that big to change the score.

'On the recipe Alan said, all the ingredients were on what the system told me.'

As all the ingredients were in it, it meant that there may be some differences on the cooking time, or the order on cooking. At least,

Jo Minjoon thought like that. It was when he was thinking like that and he ate the pasta Alan made. A faint sweet flavor passed by the tip of his tongue. It was a sweet flavor he couldn't feel in his dish.

It was then. He felt like he knew the identity of that thing.

“Maybe

Chapter 139: What A Kitchen Is (4)

As he put Alan's linguine once more in his mouth, he could still feel the same sweet flavor. It wasn't the flavor sugar gave. But even so, it also wasn't the sweet flavor of fruit.

After placing Alan's linguine in his mouth once more, he felt the same sweet flavor. It wasn't the sweet flavor of sugar, nor was it the sweet flavor of a fruit.

'Vegetables.'

He could feel faint traces of juices that came out of carrots, onions, etc. when you cooked them. However the only vegetables that came out were the basil that was put on the olive oil and the bok choy.

'Can the sweet flavor of the bok choy cover this?'

Jo Minjoon frowned. Because bok choy wasn't a vegetable with a strong sweet flavor. The charm of the bok choy was on the crunchy texture and the moist stem, and the flavor was the second thing. But it couldn't completely cover the linguine with its sweet flavor.

There weren't any more vegetables in it. The system was certainly telling him that. However, a flavor that couldn't come out with these ingredients was felt in his mouth.

The answer was one of the two. That there was a blind spot on the system or if a really uncommon and extraordinary recipe was giving the sweet flavor. But if it wasn't a completely different style like molecular gastronomy, it was impossible to bring this flavor with only these ingredients.

'If it was only used to give flavor and the used vegetable was taken out.....'

It made sense then. And the ingredient that the system didn't tell you about. Because in the end, it wasn't on the dish. Looking at the

recipe, it may tell you that it was in and taken out after a bit.....but it wasn't weird that it didn't tell you on the ingredients list.

The important thing was what did they put. He could feel that it was the sweet flavor of vegetables but beyond that, Jo Minjoon couldn't feel it through his taste.

Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at Kaya. He had an expectation that if it was her, she may have guessed the answer. However Kaya was still glaring at Alan's pasta with a confused expression and Anderson seemed to keep cooking rather than thinking, as he was standing in front of the countertop again.

In the end, Jo Minjoon went to the fridge and looked at the vegetables. Alan stood next to him and asked.

"You took out all of the ingredients before, so why did you come again?"

".....Alan. Don't act like this when I can see it all. I already realized."

"What did you?"

"The recipe you told us before, isn't 100% complete."

Alan looked at Jo Minjoon without saying anything with a face that said 'will that really be the case?'. But as he put that kind of expression, Jo Minjoon felt absolute certainness in his heart. If there was a problem it would be what kind of vegetable he used.

'Carrot. Radish. Squash. Onion.....What will it be.'

The most possible candidates in the fridge were only that. It was then. Kaya, who was looking at Alan and Jo Minjoon suspiciously, stood next to Jo Minjoon stealthily and cleared her throat.

"Why are you still here?"

"And why did you come here?"

"That's privacy violation."

Kaya said an unreasonable thing and turned her head away. Jo Minjoon stepped aside and said.

“Choose.”

“.....You aren't going to pick anything?”

“Then keep standing there.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. Kaya bit her lips and looked at Jo Minjoon's eyes and the fridge alternately. Just at first glance it seemed like she wanted to take something, but as he was watching, it seemed like it was difficult to show it.

Kaya licked her lips with an anxious face. She hit Jo Minjoon's arms with her shoulder.

“You really aren't going to leave?”

“I won't.”

“Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

Jo Minjoon opened his eyes exaggeratedly and replied. Kaya pouted her lips with a displeased face and then mumbled with a depressed voice.

“You have a finer tongue than me, so why are you acting like this?”

“Your tongue is better than mine.”

“Hmph.”

She wrinkled her nose and then extended her fingers that were as white as a peach. And the thing her hands grabbed was a bag that contained bell cabbages. Jo Minjoon let out an exclamation. Kaya held the bell cabbages like they were kids and then glanced at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon smirked and asked.

“Are you going to use all of that?”

“.....Why.”

“Let me use too.”

“Hey! Are you really going to act this cowardly?”

“Alan said last time that a kitchen is a country of the smallest shape. So things like plundering is a basic thing.”

“Plundering should also have its limit! Then let’s do it like this. After one minute that I start cooking.....”

Kaya, who was speaking, had her eyes become dark. At the end of her eyes was Anderson. It seemed like he had failed the new linguine he made, so Anderson, who was approaching them, put on a twisted smile. His eyes were fixed on the bell cabbages Kaya was holding.

“You are holding quite a funny thing?”

Kaya mumbled with an absent minded voice.

“.....I’m doomed.”

In the end it seemed like she had given up on defending the bell cabbages, that she hurriedly served the amount she was going to use. But was she acting perversely or trying to buy even a little bit more of time. Kaya tightly sealed the bag that contained the bell cabbages and put it on a deep part of the fridge, and then ran to the countertop.

Jo Minjoon took out the bell cabbages and organized his thoughts in front of the countertop. If Kaya chose it, there was a high possibility that the bell cabbages did indeed enter in the recipe. The problem was how did he use it that he couldn’t use it on the ingredients list. Precisely speaking, how would you bring out the flavor of the bell cabbage and not use it. That was the problem.

Kaya was boiling the bell cabbages with water. It seemed like she was planning to make vegetable stock. Thinking about it, it was obvious. Because to properly melt down the flavor of the bell cabbage, making stock was the fastest. But Jo Minjoon was certain, that it was wrong.

If he made stock like that, he would be seeing ‘vegetable stock’ in the ingredients list. But he didn’t see that. Most of all, even if he thought of the recipe Kaya was making..... The system was still telling him that the estimated cooking score was 9.

Anderson was grating the bell cabbages and making sap in a corner. It seemed like he was planning to use that as a sauce. However, Jo Minjoon was also certain this time that that was wrong.

“Minjoon. Why aren’t you cooking?”

“I’m setting up the recipe in my head. What can bring out the most similar flavor as Alan’s. What is the closest recipe.”

“Can you do that just by thinking.....?”

Alan asked with a tired expression. Of course, when most of the chefs accumulated experience, just by making the recipe in their heads they were able to guess that flavor to an extent. However, that was only to a certain degree.

What Jo Minjoon was trying to do now was thinking of the faint differences of flavors. They say that he has an absolute sense of taste, but will only his tongue be the sensitive thing? Is he able to think up those minuscule differences in his head and compare it?

‘.....He’s the Beethoven of the cooking world.’

He didn’t know until where Alan’s misunderstanding stretched to and Jo Minjoon replied calmly.

“I calculated in my head that the dish I’m about to prepare now is right. If my linguine isn’t different to the one being sold here in your judgement, it will be right.”

Jo Minjoon placed the linguine on the boiling water. And while it was boiling, started to slice the squid and bok choy again. Beginners had it most difficult to control the time the most because they had to slice the vegetables and fry it on a heated pan before the linguine spread.

But of course, for Jo Minjoon, it wasn't difficult at all. At first glance, his kniving will look plain, but he didn't make a mistake for even a moment. Calmly and without resting. He only took 1 minute on cutting the squid in half and 10 stems of bok choy.

Jo Minjoon heated the pan, poured olive oil, and grated basil in it. After that, it became time to put the bell cabbages. The round cabbages rolled on the pan like balls and it's aroma and flavor started to seep in the oil.

After that the squid and the bok choy started to mix in with the bell cabbages, but Jo Minjoon soon took out all of the bell cabbages. This was the reason the cabbages weren't among the ingredients.

Alan let out a low groan inwardly. He was saying maybe, but he was really recreating his recipe. And not by reading the flavor, but by imagining it.

If he only had a proper teacher, there would have been nothing wrong if he was a head chef of a famous restaurant by now. Because Rachel's husband, Daniel, became head chef at the age of 21.

Kaya tasted the linguine she made and frowned, and then didn't even bring it to Alan and was looking at Jo Minjoon cook. And it was the same for Anderson. As he made cabbage sap and put it on the pasta, he didn't feel a faint sweet flavor but a completely cabbage flavor.

Will he really make it? Expectation and feelings of not wanting him to succeed was felt. Because they wanted to win. But when Jo Minjoon served the complete linguine on a plate, they were unconsciously holding their forks in front of the dish. Kaya opened her mouth with an anxious face.

"I can eat it, right?"

But Jo Minjoon didn't answer. He was looking at the air with soft

eyes. Kaya felt a chill while looking at that Jo Minjoon. There was nothing in the air, but he was looking as if there really was something over there..... She was scared because he may be possessed by a ghost. Kaya carefully placed her hands on his shoulders.

“Minjoon?”

“Uh, huh?”

“Why are you suddenly so absent minded? Are you okay?”

“No, I thought that the dish turned out well. Eat it.”

“How do you know when you didn’t even try it.....”

Kaya that was rolling the linguine on the fork while grumbling, chewed after a while, and put on a strange expression. Her lips were smiling, and her eyes were frowning. It was a perfect flavor, just like the one Alan made. She put a smile on the happiness the flavor gave her, but she didn’t want to smile because she had lost.

Anderson and Alan ate it after her, and then nodded. Alan was about to say something but then let out a long sigh.

“I prepared for the case you weren’t able to grasp it until night.....this is too null. I took more than one month on developing this menu.”

“I had a good guideline.”

Jo Minjoon smirked and pointed at Alan’s pasta. And soon looked at his linguine with eyes full of emotions. He was able to get a score of 10 through a recipe of another person, and through the strength of the pasta.....but even that was the first case he got a 10-point dish.

‘One day with my own strength, with my own recipe.....’

Back then, when he was getting this kind of determination, the road in front of him was pitch black, but now he felt that he would be able to reach it any time. Would an adventurer with a treasure

map feel like this? His chest boiled as if he was a youth suffering from a serious fever.

At the back of Jo Minjoon, Kaya was opening her eyes like a cat but then put on a smile as if she couldn't do anything about it. Alan saw that and thought. Actually, the one that first found out about the bell cabbages was Kaya. It meant that her sense of taste was so sensitive to the point it was difficult to label it as an ordinary one.

‘If the two get to stand in the same kitchen.....’

That synergy would probably not be normal. Saliva gathered in Alan's mouth. Just like he stood in the kitchen because he liked to cook, he also liked to eat a lot. It was fun just by imagining what kind of dish would be born when the two worked together.

“So did Minjoon win?”

“Right. And you will now have to assist Minjoon.”

At Alan's words, Anderson placed the linguine he made in his mouth. Even if it wasn't a success, it seemed like he couldn't stand throwing food he made to the bin. Well, even if he didn't succeed, it was a 9-point dish. It had plenty of flavor.

‘I wanted to show teacher Rachel that I had won.’

It was unfortunate, but he couldn't do anything about it. Jo Minjoon felt thirst while looking at Kaya, and Anderson felt thirst while looking at Jo Minjoon. Although he obtained better results at Grand Chef, in the end....the attention of the world and also Rachel's was directed to Jo Minjoon.

He felt like he was look at a wall he couldn't overcome. He knew that cooking wasn't a competition with others but with himself..... When he stood next to Jo Minjoon, Anderson felt falling to a swamp that was sticky and muddy.

When he stood next to Jo Minjoon, Anderson felt like he was slowly drowning on a sticky and muddy swamp.

Anderson opened his mouth. Hesitation and his inferiority complex surged out like steam through his half-opened mouth. But Anderson wasn't as weak as to yield to that pain. Anderson opened his eyes calmly and looked at Jo Minjoon.

“.....You really are amazing.”

“Thanks.”

Jo Minjoon said with an awkward face. It felt like it was the first time he heard a compliment from Anderson himself. No, it didn't feel like a simple compliment. The emotions in his voice felt similar. Those were the emotions he had when looking at Kaya.

Anderson said that he was young and straightforward.....and because of that he spat out his greed that had more value and his competitiveness without decorating it at all.

“Wait for next time. I will certainly beat you.”

Chapter 140: What A Kitchen Is (5)

After the demi chef was decided, Alan did not only teach Jo Minjoon the recipe, but also of the turns and cooking methods. He heard several things, but what Alan put more importance on was memorizing the order you cooked the pasta.

It didn't matter when you were making one or two dishes, but if it was a place with many customers, it was important to memorize the order of the cooking pasta. Because if you mistook one for another one that was cooked for longer, you would serve an uncooked pasta in one hand and an overly-cooked one in another.

It was fortunate that they were only in charge of the linguine. It wasn't that they cooked the linguine and the other chefs cooked other kind of pasta. On the menu Olive Island gave you, there was only the linguine they ate in it. As they asked just why they did that, Alan replied like this.

“We change the menu every day of the week. And the menu of that day also changes each season.”

The first thing Jo Minjoon thought up when listening that was if there was another dish that could get this score. The difficulty of this pasta would probably be higher, it wouldn't be low at all..... But he was even curious on those recipes. Actually, this recipe was difficult to make without Alfredo's linguine. He wanted to learn a recipe with 10 points that he could make with normal ingredients.

‘.....Even when I think about it, I am just like thief.’

Jo Minjoon smacked his lips with an uncomfortable face. There were countless people that did chores on a famous restaurant for months and years just to learn that recipe. Just with having Alan's recipe exposed in a day was bitter enough for him.

After practicing a few times, there weren't anymore things he had to prepare. What remained was waiting for the customers.

As they had to have a moment to relax, the chefs that were around started to gather and speak to them. The most popular among the three was Anderson. Anderson's parents, Amelia and Fabio, were Italian-American just like you could guess from their names. Because of that, Anderson was also able to speak in Italian. For them that weren't fluent in English, they could only speak with Anderson.....or talk to the other two through interpreters.

While Anderson was being held back by the other chefs, there was one person that approached Kaya and Jo Minjoon. It was the youngest chef that didn't hold her joy when she first met them, Berta. She loosened her yellow scarf in her neck and then extended a pen with an excited face.

"Can I.....get the autograph of you two?"

"Ah, of course."

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and then signed on the scarf. It was when Kaya received the pen. Berta opened her mouth carefully.

"If it's okay, can you overlap your signature with Minjoon's?"

".....Yes? Why?"

"Although there may be people that received signatures from both of you, there will be no one with something like this. I like being the first. Even if I'm not able to be the last..... The first has it's romantic feeling of its own."

"The first....."

Kaya repeated those words and then extended her hand and wrote over the scarf. It was a horrible hand writing. Kaya flushed with an embarrassed face.

"I can't write that well."

"No. The point that it's your signature, uh.....has value. Yes. Thank you."

They didn't dislike her trying to express her feelings with English

however she could. Kaya looked at her name that was over Jo Minjoon's. Her slender fingers and long nails slowly touched those words. Soon, Berta received that scarf and tied it on her neck.

“I will treasure it all my life.”

You couldn't know if those were mannered words or if it was really sincere. And even after that, pretty and soft words came and went between them for a long time. But just like everything, the sweet time had come to an end. 4:50. Soon, the chefs were on standby to prepare for the customers that were soon to come.

Alan looked at them while standing between the hall and the kitchen. Some customers that just entered were getting their orders received by the waiters and waitresses. Alan said in a calm voice.

“The reason I gave you a spot on my kitchen isn't for the fun of the broadcast. That reason is simple. I trust in your capabilities, mentality, and heart. I'm certain that even under pressure, you won't present a mess of a dish or aren't as incompetent as to make the customers wait.

Alan met the eyes of Jo Minjoon, Kaya, and Anderson, and then continued speaking in a low voice.

“It would be good if my senses weren't wrong. I just hope for a joyful laughter from the customers. Only then will you and me be able to end the day while laughing.”

When he was about to finish speaking, a bill came out from the machine. Alan pulled that out and yelled in a solid voice.

“13 table. Day course for 4 people. Start!”

The appetizer section cooks started to move their hands quickly. It wasn't time for Jo Minjoon and the two yet. It took about 20 minutes to enjoy all of the appetizer. And they didn't even take 8 minutes to make the linguine.

Jo Minjoon calmly turned to look at Kaya.

“Kaya. Check the temperature of the water.”

“It’s just right.”

“Anderson. You already made the basil olive oil, right?”

“I will be able to make more than 100 dishes.”

Jo Minjoon nodded. He calmly looked at the ingredients. Just that was enough. Where it derived from, quality, freshness. He could check all of that in an instant. And Alan was certainly Alan. There wasn’t a single ingredient on the countertop that was in bad conditions.

He calmly checked the time. They had to start the pasta when the amuse-bouche returned. The time required to eat the following appetizers, the ceviche and mozzarella, took about 7 minutes, and it was just right to make the linguine.

“Kaya. Linguine.”

“Yeah. First, it was for 4 people, right?”

“After two minutes we have to cook for 3 more people.”

“I understand.”

Cooking the suitable amount based on the people on a table. That was what made you focus quite a lot. But Jo Minjoon didn’t feel this to be that hard. He was basically someone with a good head. When he went to school, memorizing subjects were his strong point, and memorizing the order wasn’t even a bit hard.

Anderson sliced the squid and bok choy, and gave it to Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon covered the oil with a sweet aroma with the bok choy, just like the recipe, and on top of that put the squid and bok choy and fried it. He flambéed it with white wine and then Kaya put on the pasta on the right time. Then, it was completed.

As Jo Minjoon placed to linguine on the dish prettily, Alan raised that and checked it everywhere. He cleaned off the places that had olive oil splashed, and then raised one noodle and tasted it. There

were no problems. In just one day, no, precisely speaking in just some hours he had perfectly mastered the recipe.....

‘As he has the skills, it’s certainly different.’

Alan nodded. Actually, simply looking at their cooking skills, the trio didn’t fall back that greatly compared to his sous chef. They were this talented. Even if Kaya or Anderson had grabbed the pan instead of Jo Minjoon, the result probably wouldn’t have changed that much.

Because cooking had to be perfect in its process for the results to also be perfect. Making 10-point dishes this stably was possible because of Anderson and Kaya doing their work.

But it was possible because customers still didn’t flock over. They, who were deep in the kitchen couldn’t see, but Alan could. That people were slowly starting to gather. And the time the bill machine printed out bills also became shorter.

Alan was in the middle of checking their dishes. Footsteps of four people directed to Alan. Alan turned his head and said.

“Did you enjoy your trip on Florencia?”

“Florencia is a city that’s always cool and delicious whenever you come. The streets and dishes are filled with romance.”

“I’m glad then.”

At Rachel’s words, Alan laughed softly. Jeremy touched his chin and said.

“Looking at the situation, the one who won is Minjoon?”

“Yes.”

“Certainly as his taste is sensitive, it really is different.”

“Um, the situation was different.....well, similar.”

It was seen that Kaya was the one that realized the existence of the bell cabbage, but actually he still couldn’t know if Jo Minjoon

actually knew and pretended not to know. Sera crossed her arms and looked at them cooking.

“I think that chefs are certainly sexiest when in front of the countertop. Right Emily?”

“Uh, yea. Right.What are those odd eyes?”

“Nothing. Only that you really understand well the sexiness of a chef.”

Sera talked like that and glanced at Alan. Emily coughed as if she had caught a cold and then pinched Sera for her to stop eyeing Alan.

“Auch! What are you doing?”

“Sh. Be quiet. Do you want to keep tying us like that?”

“You also tied up Kaya and Minjoon....”

“This and that are different things!”

“It doesn’t look like.....ah, I understand. Don’t put on that teary face.”

“It’s not a teary face, but an unfair one.”

Sera looked at Emily with a face saying maybe. If you asked people what kind of face was that, what would they answer?

Emily took of her eyes on Sera on purpose and looked at the hall. There was no need to do so, but as they kept broadcasting together, did she feel that they were at the same team. She started to look at the expressions of the people eating the linguine just as if they were her customers.

What was fortunate was that no one among them frowned. There may be some differences, but they were all satisfied and some were drunk in the lingering feelings while closing their eyes. Emily put on a calm smile and smiled faintly.

“Rachel. How nice. I think that Minjoon will be a good disciple.”

“Yes. Of course.”

Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon, Kaya, and Anderson. The orders kept coming out endlessly but they didn't panic. Some may think what was that great on that.

But it wasn't that simple of a story. The number of pans and the place you could cook pasta was limited. So while facing orders that ask beyond those limitations, even if you were a veteran chef, you couldn't help but get shaken.

And that shaking laid mistakes, and mistakes made dishes come late. The reason why dishes came out after a long while on famous restaurants was also because of these things.

But Jo Minjoon didn't make a mistake, nor did Kaya and Anderson. Because it wasn't their restaurant anyways, it wasn't that their nervousness became less because they thought like that. If they did, their eyes wouldn't be shining like that.

“Um.....”

Rachel, who had opened her mouth, closed her mouths for a moment. She wasn't even aware of it, but her voice was wet. But it wasn't on sadness or things like that. Stirring emotions. The burning youth and passion made her soul and heart shake. Rachel opened her mouth again. Her voice was still watery, but this time she didn't try to hide it.

“Those kids are really beautiful.”

“Beautiful.....?”

Emily asked with a confused face. She could see that their concentrated looks on cooking was shining and cool, but she felt that the word beautiful was a bit excessive. However Rachel was serious. She continued saying.

“They aren't mature yet and have their road to walk. But they aren't anxious. On their path, and the orders piling up in front of them.”

“.....Mm, if it’s that rather than beautiful shouldn’t it be composed?”

“Composed.....That may be so. But can they do that just by being composed? An unfamiliar place and an unfamiliar kitchen. You have to make an unfamiliar recipe among unfamiliar chefs. There was also a similar situation on Grand Chef. But it’s different with that. The people back then ate the food of the participants, but on this place the customers are the ones to eat their food. They are there because they are pros. With young hands that don’t have wrinkles.”

It was difficult to understand exactly what Rachel was talking about, but she could clearly feel her feelings. Emily and even Sera, who was next to her, nodded unconsciously and Rachel spew out the burning fire in her chest through words.

“It’s because they love.”

At that moment Sera’s eyes went to Kaya and Jo Minjoon and returned. There was no way she would be talking about that. Rachel continued speaking.

“They love cooking. They love the moment they cook. That’s why they are able to beat the pressure and fear.”

Rachel could understand the feelings of those three the best. Because once she was also standing at the same place as them. Rachel smiled warmly.

“What kind of customer will be able to eat that food deliciously. They made it with that much love. Even if the country and territory changes, one thing won’t.”

“What’s that?”

“Food filled with love is delicious.”

Those were common words but was it because of the person that said that. In the end, it wasn’t felt that lightly. Rachel looked at the three of them with eyes filled with affection, as if she were looking

at her grandchildren.

“It’s a law of the kitchen that won’t change for eternity.”

Chapter 141: People Over The Crossroad (1)

The dish leaves, the dish returns. You could know how delicate and sweet this bridge between the two processes was even without rolling your head.

The dishes of the three was like that. Anderson's, Kaya's, and Minjoon's dish was like that. After serving the last pasta of the last table, the tight nervousness got eased up slowly. Jo Minjoon breathed in while turning off the fire.

"This is fun."

".....It is but it's too hot."

Kaya wiped off the sweat flowing down her forehead and fluttered her clothes. And then stealthily brought her mouth to Jo Minjoon's ear. He thought that the smell of her skin wet in sweat was walking towards his nose, but soon a husky voice filled his ear.

"Let's go to the fridge."

"No. You can't."

"Can't you just tell me that I can?"

"Don't act spoiled. Also."

Jo Minjoon grabbed Kaya's chin with an awkward face and separated it. He cleared his throat.

"I'm also hot. Don't stick to me."

".....Cruel bastard."

Kaya glared at Jo Minjoon with a reproachful expression and then left. Anderson clicked his tongue and shook his head.

"Do you know that it's really frustrating looking at the two of you."

".....I understand what you are trying to say, but don't say anything."

“I also hate butting in matters of other people but I can’t help feeling frustrated.”

Jo Minjoon just looked at Kaya instead of answering. She approached Berta, who was washing the dishes and was talking to her as a bully. Just like the paper that melted when placed on water, Jo Minjoon slowly showed his feelings over his lips.

“Kaya. I think that she’s a really good girl.”

“.....I don’t think I will be getting that thought in my life.”

“Why. She is like that. She lived a harsh life, and speaks roughly, but her heart isn’t like that.”

“That heart, she is only like that towards you. You say that because you didn’t look at the faces of the ones Kaya cursed at.”

“That may also be true.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders and moved next to Alan. It wasn’t that they had a conversation to speak. He wanted to see how the customers outside of the kitchen, at the hall, were eating his linguine.

There were only three tables that were still eating linguine. An old couple, young couple, and a family of four with small kids. Their linguine was rolled in the forks and every time it entered their mouths, Jo Minjoon gulped. And when their eyes bent down softly, his heart also let out a calm sigh. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I want to go out and ask them.”

“What?”

“If my linguine was delicious. I want to ask it to everyone.”

“But why don’t you?”

“In case my light attitude disturbs the emotions given by the dish. As I can’t give it more flavor, I can’t disturb a happy time. And.....”

Jo Minjoon spoke with a voice that was covered with happiness.

“I don’t think there’s a need to ask them.”

The old and young couple, and the family of four were all eating the linguine with satisfied faces. He couldn’t listen to their conversation, but he felt like he could know even when he couldn’t listen.

Sera approached Jo Minjoon’s side and looked at the hall. And opened her mouth as if she couldn’t understand well.

“How do you feel when looking at that as a chef?”

“It’s the best. Is there something else to ask for? Chefs exist to give customers a delicious memory. And when the customer leaves the table happily, the chef got recognized all his life with just that. The smiles of those people..... are telling me that my life isn’t worthless. I can only be happy.”

“I’m jealous.”

“About what?”

“Everything. You have a sense of taste every epicurean and chefs are jealous of, and that you get happy with just a smile of a customer.”

Jo Minjoon, who was looking at the hall, turned to look at Sera. And Sera flinched at that moment. He was certainly three years younger than her, he was a youth close to being a teen. But the depth of his eyes seemed to be deeper than hers.

‘.....What are them, those eyes.’

Those were eyes that made people feel nervous for nothing. Should you say that it felt that the deep parts of your heart got read and touched? It was to the point that Kaya fell for him because of these eyes. Sera gulped. She felt that all of the muscles in her face hardened. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Sera is also a good epicurean.”

“Based on what are you telling me that?”

Sera put on a provocative smile. But it was only a pretentious one. The thread of uneasiness hidden behind her confidence was seen in Jo Minjoon’s eyes.

“Sera, if there is something a chef needs the most, what do you think that may be?”

“.....I wonder. Isn’t it greed to make delicious food?”

“That may also be the answer. When they talk among them with that, their opinions split everywhere. Some say that it has to be the heart towards the customer, and some that you have to protect your own philosophy. Well, honestly speaking is there an answer for a question like this? But.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Sera’s eyes properly. He spoke like a teacher teaching his student.

“You said it with your own mouth. That the greed to make delicious things is the most important thing for a chef. Then, if you are also filled with feelings of wanting to enjoy food as an epicurean, won’t that be enough with that? Don’t be jealous of me. Sera, you are shining plentifully with that.”

Although it wasn’t frequent, he had seen positive opinions about Sera in the internet. That she was a cosplay epicurean star that has her looks as a weapon. But Jo Minjoon didn’t agree to that.

Sera plentifully understood what kind of composition there was on a dish. But he wasn’t saying this just because her tasting level was 8. Because each and every word she usually says is directed to cooking in the end.

Jo Minjoon was thinking that Sera was a good epicurean. Because of that, he couldn’t agree to her feeling ashamed.

“You really think like that.....?”

“People think that I am gentle. I’m not. If I didn’t think well of

you, I wouldn't have consoled you like this."

Sera shut her mouths for a bit. Several thoughts passed over her head. As the person she was jealous of and admired at the same time to recognize her like this, she couldn't think how she should accept this. Should she still say that she was worse than him. Or thank him.

One certain thing was that funnily enough, Jo Minjoon's words consoled her heart. Actually it wasn't that different to what Emily had told her, but it felt different coming out of Jo Minjoon's mouth. Sera looked at Jo Minjoon for a moment and then opened her mouth.

"French fries. Do you pour over it or dip it?"

"I dip it."

"I pour it."

Jo Minjoon looked at Sera as if what was she trying to say. Sera smirked and said.

"Just because an absolute sense of taste dips it doesn't mean that the ones that pour it are in the wrong."

Emily, who was listening to their conversation, laughed softly. Alan, that was next to her, looked at Emily and asked.

"Why are you laughing?"

"The girl who was lacking something when I spoke to her, fixed her heart immediately like that when Minjoon speaks. So it was amazing. Are words really different based on who says it?"

".....That may be the case. Even if it's me and when I hear that it is delicious, based on who says it the happiness varies. When teacher Rachel.....or an excellent epicurean like you says that my food is delicious, I can only feel better."

"Oh please, don't say things like that in front of the camera."

Emily flushed as if she was embarrassed. While they were having

this atmosphere, Rachel was smiling brightly in front of Rachel and Kaya.

“You two did really well today.”

“Did we do something. In the end we only supported Minjoon.”

“But there aren’t dishes without supporters. You perfectly accomplished the needed role. Isn’t that enough to compliment you with just that?”

Anderson answered as if he was sneering at himself but Rachel still kept on her smile because it was true. Jo Minjoon wasn’t the only amazing one. Even when you do the same thing for hours, to not have made any mistakes in that process even once had already proved themselves. Rachel opened and closed her mouth and said.

“I feel like I am becoming a greedy old lady as I keep saying this in front of the camera.....But even so I can’t not say this. Anderson, Kaya, I want to also make the same proposal I did to Minjoon.”

Anderson opened his eyes abruptly. It was clear what that proposal was. She was talking about entering Rose Island, Rachel’s kitchen. Anderson opened his mouth hurriedly but shut it again. If he spoke now, he felt like his voice was going to tremble. Rachel patted Anderson’s arm with a sorry expression.

“You always showed me a mannered look, but I can only repay you like this.”

“N, no. Thank you. I’m really.....really thankful.”

He felt like all the sorrow piled until now was going to be washed away, and tears would flow out. Anderson sobbed and gulped down the cry that rose up to his throat. Anderson looked at Rachel with a determined look.

“I will certainly pay you back that you believed in me.”

“I will certainly pay you back for believing in me.”

“It’s good getting a resolution, but don’t feel burdened. It’s not for you, but for the customers. The heart of a chef always gets colored on their dishes.”

“I think that if Teacher Rachel stands in the kitchen, I will be able to cook with a happy heart for all my life.”

Rachel nodded with a faint smile and then turned her head to Kaya. Kaya couldn’t reply anything with a perplexed face. Rachel said as if she understood.

“I know Kaya that it is difficult for you to answer this with your situation. But the expiration date of my proposal will be much larger than what you think. I feel like I already told you at the competition in Grand Chef that you should grab my hands when it’s time. I think that this will be possible when you finish all of your activities as a Grand Chef.”

“.....It’s something I haven’t thought about so it’s difficult to answer. But first, I will think seriously about it..”

“Yes. I will be waiting for a nice reply.”

After a short while of their conversation having ended, they were on the bus returning to their lodging. The seat of the corridor. While sitting next to Jo Minjoon, Kaya was thinking again about the proposal Rachel made.

It was a charming proposal. When she finished all of the activities of Grand Chef, there were two things which she could choose from. The first, meeting the owner of a small restaurant and becoming a head chef..... Or slowly climb up on Rose Island, which has a big and good reputation.

Based on her choices, there would be completely different results. If she just does well, she may become a recognized head chef at a young age. If it was the latter one, she may not be able to obtain something big immediately but at least, she will be given a chance to grow up while certainly learning. As she has never

received proper teaching, An opportunity of being able to learn under a giant like Rachel was more precious than anything.

But what was funny was that Kaya didn't feel the charm on Rachel's proposal on the part that Rachel was in it. The main store of Rose island. If she went there then.....

‘He may also be there.’

Kaya slightly turned her head. Maybe he had worked too hard that Jo Minjoon was sleeping while laying his head on the support of the chair. She thought that he would turn her head towards her just like it happens in melo films, but it didn't happen. Jo Minjoon's neck was hard, and his posture was also firm.

She looked at her surroundings. Emily seemed to be texting with someone that her eyes were fixed in her smartphone, and Alan and Rachel were talking about the things that would happen in the kitchen. Jeremy fell asleep and Sera was absentmindedly looking at the exotic view of a foreign country spread beyond the car window.

The remaining thing was the installed camera. Kaya flocked her clothes pretending to feel hot and then took off her cardigan, which was filled with holes, and placed it over her and Jo Minjoon's knees. She thought that he may wake up, but fortunately that didn't happen.

On the world below the cardigan, Kaya's fingers wriggled out. When her hand, that was stuttering over his leg reached Jo Minjoon's hand, a satisfied smile appeared on Kaya's mouth. Kaya touched the back of his hand for a moment and soon grabbed it. Her heart started to beat because she felt that she was doing something wrong, but her heart was rather relaxed.

She felt like she may fall asleep like this. It was when Kaya thought like that and was about to close her eyes. A vibration occurred in her pocket. Kaya took out her smartphone with worn out eyes and opened the screen.

Something vibrated in her pocket.

And after a while, Kaya unconsciously gripped Jo Minjoon's hands harder.

Chapter 142: People Over The Crossroad (2)

Kaya's eyes, which were filled with chaos, trembled. Even after reading the message, closing her eyes, and turning off her smartphone, that message didn't leave her head. 'I'm sorry for the sudden message. Kaya. To go straight to the point, I'm your real father. If you see this message, can you reply?'

She remembered the words Tess Gilly said when they met a while ago. That her father was looking for her. When she heard that, Kaya thought that that 'father' was going to be the one that made her mother pregnant with Gemma and left.

"He wasn't.....Gemma's side?"

"What are you mumbling alone?"

Kaya got surprised at the voice heard right next to her and turned her head. And only then did she realize that she was still holding Jo Minjoon's hands. And while covering it with her cardigan at that. Kaya hurriedly raised both of her arms and said.

"Ah, it's nothing."

"I think you were looking at your smartphone..... Is it an ill comment again?"

"No. It's not something like that. And now, I don't even get hurt by those ill comments..... Maybe. Anyways, now I'm not that weak to crumble with that much."

Kaya said with a determined face. Jo Minjoon smirked and raised his hand. The cardigan Kaya covered that hand with was hanging on that. Kaya flushed and took away her cardigan.

"I just took it off because I was hot."

"The aircon is on."

"It was turned on just now. It was hot before. I will wear it now."

Kaya answered like that, wore the cardigan, and then sighed

inwardly.

It was still hot.

—

Their lodging. Kaya was just standing still while entrusting her body to the hot water coming out of the shower. Her wet hair stuck to her back, and water drops flowed endlessly from her long eyelashes. The feeling of her hair touching her neck was bad.

No, she just felt bad. Tomorrow she would leave this place and entrust her body to busy schedules again. And..... The sudden message that came was also like that. She thought that it was a misrepresentation, but in the first place if that was the case, how would he have known her phone number?

Kaya has never seen her real father even once. As he left even before she had some rationality, she could obviously not remember. Honestly, she thought about this when she was young. Wasn't it that even her mother, Grace, didn't know who her father was.

“.....I'm sorry. Mom.”

Her quiet voice washed off with the water. Kaya looked at the drops of water flowing down her body for a long time and then closed the tap. Below her eyebrows, the deep double eyelids flashed fiercely. Kaya opened her eyes abruptly and glared at herself in the mirror.

“Kaya. Get a hold of yourself.”

But just what did she have to do after she got a hold of herself? To call her mother, she thought that it was only making her worried for nothing.

She thought that after washing herself, her head would be a bit lighter but after she got out of the shower, her head was as heavy as wet cotton. Emily looked at that Kaya and asked with a worried look.

“Kaya, is something wrong? Your expression is dark.”

“.....Life is always a ball of trouble.”

“Weren’t you fine until the afternoon? What, did you fight with Minjoon?”

“Minjoon doesn’t make it hard for me.”

Kaya said with ferocious eyes. Emily shook her hands saying not to misinterpret it.

“I’m not saying that.....well. It seems like you aren’t going to tell me even if I ask. What, shall I console you at least?”

“I’m fine. I can overcome it alone.”

“Is there a need to do so?”

The one that replied at Kaya’s words wasn’t Emily but Sera. She, who was lying on the sofa watching the TV that was on a channel speaking in Italian, was looking at Kaya as if it was difficult to understand. Kaya smacked her lips as if she was momentarily perplexed. Sera was a difficult person to face because of her lady-like looks but harsh temperament. On top of that, the words she brought up were even more difficult. Kaya hesitated and answered.

“It’s obvious that I don’t want to trouble anyone.”

“How is getting consoled a trouble? That is obvious. The person that consoles doesn’t particularly suffer. Rather, they may feel it rewarding that they are consoling someone. More so if that person is someone very close.”

It was a bit vague as to who Sera was talking about. Was she talking about Jo Minjoon, or she was simply saying the really close ones. But at that moment, the one that appeared in Kaya’s head was Jo Minjoon. And at that instant, she understood how she felt.

I want to be next to Jo Minjoon. Being consoled or not comes for later. I want to be with him. With just that, she felt that her emotions may calm down. But.....

“I still don’t want it.”

“.....Why?”

“A relation that I only receive, if this continues more than this I will be too embarrassed to look at Minjoon.”

At those words, Sera couldn’t say anything because it wasn’t her role to butt in. Rachel smiled softly at that conversation and said.

“It’s nice to see.”

“.....This is?”

“All of these worries are a sign of youth. Just because you age, it doesn’t mean that your worries disappear, but it’s not easy to maintain that pretty face and heart.”

At Rachel’s compliment, Kaya touched her nose with an uncomfortable face. Kaya furtively sat in the sofa arm which Rachel was seated at. Sera, who looked that, smirked and said.

“I saw in the broadcast that you sat in the arms of the chairs a lot. It seems it’s a habit?”

“Ah. In our house, we only have one sofa for two people. Actually, there were many sofas thrown away in the streets, but we didn’t have space to place it. That’s why when my mother and sister sat down, I always sat at the armrest.”

It was quite a dark past taking into account how composedly she said it. But as she said it really calmly, they didn’t know if they had to express regret or not. Sera succeeded on not showing her troubled emotions through her face, but failed to accept those words without much care. As she didn’t know what to say to her. Rachel opened her mouth calmly.

“Poverty is a tragedy when you are in the middle of it, but if you get over it, it rather makes people shine more than before. Between people that overcame poverty without holding anything in their hands and people that didn’t have a need to overcome it in

the first place, the first ones are seen more amazingly.”

“You are complimenting me that I’m amazing, right?”

“It’s good to see it as admiring. All the people in the world will root for you as to how more you can shine. And probably, I will be one of those people.”

“.....Your complimenting skills are really good.”

Kaya softly pulled the corner of her mouth. The dim compliment approached without burdens and loosened her mood. Kaya added.

“I get that thought. That I will be able to have a really fun time when I enter your kitchen.”

“Is it because of me? Or because of Minjoon?”

“Don’t ask such question. Don’t you already know the answer?”

It was when they were conversing like that. The bell rang from the front door. They looked at each other. Emily opened her mouth.

“It looks like it’s the guys. I will go out.”

Emily stood up and went to the interphone. And at that moment, she could only doubt her eyes. It was just like she had said. Guys. But among the guys, there was a face that shouldn’t have been there.

“.....Alan?”

Her mouth hardened with a smile. Emily hurriedly went to the door while almost tripping over her own foot. The moment she opened the door widely, a yell was heard. Anderson was grabbing his side with a low posture and frowned. He groaned with a painful voice.

“Uh.....Emily! Open the door more slowly.”

“Ah, ah. I’m sorry.”

“Why are you blaming her like that? Her heart must have been in

a hurry.”

Jeremy talked like that and smirked. Emily flushed at those eyes that seemed to know all about her feelings. Even when she had already seen him through the interphone, Emily opened her eyes roundly as if she realized just now and looked at Alan.

“Alan? How are you here?”

“I finished business, and the night is still long. Teacher Rachel is also leaving soon, so I wanted to see her face one more time. I think it will be difficult to escort you to the airport. And.....”

Alan was about to say something but shut his mouth again. Emily said with an awkward voice.

“Ah. Right. We won’t be able to see tomorrow.”

“.....Can I go in?”

“Of course. Come in.”

Emily let him in in a hurry. Alan looked at Rachel and smiled brightly.

“Teacher. I have come.”

“Why did you come again?”

“Of course, to see teacher.”

Rachel looked at Alan with sharp eyes at those words. She could clearly see that that wasn’t the only reason, but she permitted him to use her name just this once. Rachel looked at Alan as if she was looking at her cute grandson and said.

“We came here well today. Olive Island. I couldn’t teach you for long, but I feel proud for nothing looking that you are finding the right path by your own.”

“I still have a way to go. One day, I will open a greater restaurant than the main store of Rose Island.”

“Right. That will have a meaning by its own. It would be good if I

can see that while I'm still alive."

"You will live for 100 years more. Don't speak like you are such an elder. You are still young."

"If I live for 100 years longer I will be 160. Are you telling me to live in solitude for 100 more years?"

"Why, there are some sexy old men among my friends, do you want me to introduce you to some?"

Jeremy laughed playfully and said. Rachel didn't even reply, but altogether acted as if she hadn't even heard that. Rachel smiled brightly and looked at Anderson and Jo Minjoon.

"My disciples have come."

"Now that I see, I really became a disciple of teacher."

Rachel's words became quite light compared to before. That voice was unfamiliar but quite nice to listen at. Anderson said with an excited voice.

"But teacher's kitchen you were talking about.....You are talking about the one that is in Venice, right?"

"That's the only place I'm supposed to be, isn't that right?"

Rachel said with a voice mixed with solitude and grief. And then looked at Jo Minjoon and Anderson with eyes filled with a strong ambition.

"But I want to make that place to shine more than ever. I won't make that place the tomb of Daniel. I hope you help me do that. If only that happens, later.....no, I shouldn't say this now."

Rachel was about to say something but shut her mouth. She looked at Kaya and said.

"Anyways, it's a bit regrettable that miss Kaya won. I really want her to the point that I want to bring her immediately."

"But teacher."

Alan opened his mouth. He said with a face that was a bit worried.

“Anderson and Minjoon are certainly skilled friends. And they also have talent. One day, they will grow to be excellent chefs. But.....I don’t know about being demi chef, but it will be hard to make them sous chef because of their inexperience. What are you planning to do about that place?”

“This is a secret but.....Alan, bring your ear closer.”

Rachel whispered something at Alan’s ears. And Alan opened his eyes roundly as if he couldn’t believe it.

“That person? No, just how.....”

“It seems like I’m still popular.”

Rachel smiled with a triumphant face. The conversation naturally took focus on what kind of restaurant Rachel wanted to run. Rachel said with a voice of a girl that was dreaming.

“I will find back the shape of when Daniel was still alive. The menu will change a bit periodically, and all the dishes have to be perfect that are able to overcome the likings and dislikings of people. All the staff will think together with you. What dish will you make tomorrow, how will the ingredients be. But of course, it will be lacking with just this. Because it’s no different to other restaurants. My experience may be able to bring Daniel’s old dishes, but it’s difficult to chase the understanding and imagination of his extraordinary flavor. That’s why I wanted you that much. Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon just faced Rachel’s eyes. He looked at an old lady that was too exhausted compared to her age, but because of that she burns down her soul more anxiously. The old lady asked with a voice filled with affection, expectation, and thankfulness.

“Thank you for coming to me. I will help you so you can use that sense the best you can. At least, I will make it so that there is no

one that is able to follow you on flavor creativeness. Will you believe in me?"

He felt stifled, but the decision has already been made. He couldn't put it down or throw it away and flee. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes abruptly. Perhaps, the surrounding people may say that the resolution in his eyes had an excessive colour of desperation. But he could only be like that. He wanted to repay Rachel's trust even if he had to offer everything.

"I do trust in teacher. And I will do it. On whatever situation comes."

Rachel smiled, and Jo Minjoon also did the same. Although the smell of his smile was a bit different.....

What he was looking at would probably be the same.

Chapter 143: People Over The Crossroad (3)

Even after Rachel talked about things related to her restaurant for quite a while, conversations kept coming and going between them. When the night deepened and was about to become dawn, Alan stood up from his place.

“I will have to go now. It was a nice day.”

“Ah, wait. Let’s go together. I will accompany you to the garage.”

Emily stood up hurriedly. Alan smirked for a moment but then fixed his expression. With the both of them leaving, people started to talk among themselves. Anderson stuck to Rachel, and Jeremy and Sera were talking together. As the situation turned like that, only Kaya remained next to Jo Minjoon.

Kaya looked at her smartphone. It wasn’t the message that came from the person that claimed to be her father. In the first place, she didn’t even know if it was real. And, even if it was, she didn’t want to answer it immediately as if she had been waiting for it. In addition, to be a father that hasn’t called you in all his life and called you after you became famous..... she was worried that he may be a brute with a human face that appeared frequently on the news.

‘Perhaps, he just couldn’t get in contact.No, that’s not true. Kaya. Get a hold of yourself. You can’t become weak.’

Even for trying to shake away that thought, Kaya had a need to fix her eyes on the words that filled her smartphone. Most of them were conversations by people after the live broadcast.

Allison Raskin : Italy. Honestly speaking, I don’t think I ate Italian food that deliciously. But of course, there is also Italian style pizza cooked in a stove.....I wonder if it’s because I’m American but I like the American style the most.

└ Sara Rubin : Italian pizza is also delicious! To the point that

they pour ten times more cheese.

└ Adam Jones : @Allison Raskin @Sara Rubin You will get sick like that.

Lynda Q : Minjoon grabbed four rabbits at the same time. Michelin restaurant, job, broadcasting fee, and Kaya.

└ Kaya Lotus : Are you sure about the last one?

└ Lynda Q : @Kaya Lotus If you had eyes, wouldn't everyone be certain? Your nickname is good by the way.

└ Jonathan Rowling : @ Lynda Q @Kaya Lotus You don't know if it is really her. Last time Kaya was interviewing. She took a lot of attention on internet reactions.

Kaya hurriedly placed her finger over the delete button but lowered it again. She thought that if she deleted it, they may really suspect about it. Jo Minjoon butted his head next to her side and cleared his throat.

"I don't know why people like what others say this much."

"I also like it, words of other people."

"You didn't say that in front of me..... Although you did curse Anderson a bit."

"You have sides you don't want to show to certain people. However, you try to decorate it, talking about others doesn't seem right. And I don't want to be seen that way."

There would be no need to add words such as at least in front of you. Jo Minjoon slightly looked at the photos that appeared in Kaya's phone. They were screens taken in the live broadcast. There was one that Kaya and Jo Minjoon were looking at each other softly in the middle of the pictures taken by the staff. They didn't realize it at that time, but they felt weird looking at it through a picture.

Kaya turned her head. As their two awkward eyes met, only a

bigger awkwardness remained. Jo Minjoon turned his eyes to the kitchen and said.

“Do you want to eat some night snacks?”

“Ri-right. That’s good. Let’s go.”

Although her agent had certainly warned her to diet because she was about to take some pictures for a magazine, those words were soon erased from her head. As the two of them stood up, the others also looked at them. Kaya said in an awkward voice.

“We are about to make something simple, do you have any orders?”

“Mmm.....It would be good if it’s bread. Do we have an oven here?”

“We don’t as it’s a hotel. What can you make with a frying pan.....is it only about a pancake or a crepe? I will make it once for now.”

It was when Kaya talked like that and was about to leave. Anderson opened his mouth.

“Want some help?”

“Oh, Duksam. I really appreciate your thought. But I will only receive that.”

It was a gentle tone, but that was rather the problem. Because there was no way that Anderson would talk to Kaya in a gentle tone. And actually, she was glaring at him with cold eyes as if she wouldn’t leave him alone if he stood up. In the end, Anderson smirked and leaned his back on the sofa and Kaya put back that Anderson and grumbled.

“That Anderson is always detestable in weird places.”

“Why?”

“Are you really asking me that because you don’t know?”

Jo Minjoon turned his head away. “How naughty,” Kaya smirked and mumbled and then opened the fridge. You wouldn’t know if it was a basic option of the hotel or if it was prepared by the staff..... But there were quite a lot of ingredients. Eggs, dairy products, cheese, canned food, hotcake powder, etc. Kaya opened her mouth.

“What shall I make. Pancake? Crepe?”

“Hmm....Aren’t the both a bit... to eat them at night?”

“Is there something good to eat at night? Pick quickly.”

“Let’s just make one each. I will make the crepe, you do the pancake. It seems like there is a place for the both of us to stand.”

Kaya looked at the burner and nodded. She wondered if it was too small for the two of them to stand together, but it didn’t matter.

Kaya looked through the cupboard and then came with the hotcake mix. Jo Minjoon looked at that with a strange expression and asked.

“You are a chef, so can you use that?”

“Is there a rule that says that chefs can’t?”

Jo Minjoon took out the ingredients to make the dough from the fridge. Even if it was called ingredient, it was quite simple. Flour, milk, eggs. After beating the eggs you put flour to the point it melted down thickly, and if you poured milk slowly over there the dough became complete.

But of course, if you went with the original method, it was good to let it rest for an hour or at least half an hour. But honestly speaking, it was obvious that it would become burdensome to eat it by then. Jo Minjoon melted butter on the frying pan and smirked.

“When I run a restaurant, later on, I will have to get a separate baker.”

“Even if their skill is good, it’s normally like that. When they

become the head chef, they don't have the leisure to make things like that."

"That's why I was a bit taken aback. You know. Why is the person with the most accumulated experience doesn't work at the front."

"As you said before, it seems like you changed opinions."

"Yeah. Thanks to Teacher Rachel."

"Teacher Rachel.....You really started admiring her."

Kaya looked at Rachel. At the end of her sight, there was a small bit of jealousy. Jo Minjoon glanced at Kaya's pan and said.

"Flip it over. It's burning."

"Ah, yeah."

Fortunately, the pancake was quite smoothly cooked. The side that was cooked with a delicious brown color had a yellow chick color on the inside, so that was why it was more charming. After cooking four pancakes like that, Kaya cooked a pancake that was half the size of a palm this time. She just cooked one side and on the other, she placed some kind of jam, cream, etc and folded it like a half moon and then placed small fruits like cherry and blueberries.

Jo Minjoon's crepe was simpler than Kaya's. Precisely speaking, it was shorter. First, it was much thinner compared to a hotcake. It didn't take long to cook it, and over the crepes that were cooked like that, several ingredients were put in. Cheese and thin slices of ham, and basil and pesto.....or banana and chocolate, or strawberry and cream, etc.

Excluding the fact that you had to do the dough, there was no better dish than a crepe to eat a meal deliciously. Normal people would feel burdened by the fact that you had to do the dough so they didn't make it that frequently.....but honestly, that was the most suitable thing to eat as a snack in a family.

“.....You already made everything.”

Kaya mumbled with a regrettable voice. The meaning of it was that the time of them which they could spend together in the kitchen had also ended. Jo Minjoon glanced at that Kaya and said while slightly stepping back.

“You also have to rest it.”

“.....It’s not a steak, but you want to rest crepe and hotcakes?”

“Why can’t you? The more absurd the creativeness of a chef is, the better results it brings. No. Let’s try it us first. The flavor may be weird, and the ingredients may not have been good.”

It wasn’t something Jo Minjoon, who could know the freshness of the ingredients and the dish through the system, should be saying. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon as if he was helpless, but soon loosened her expression and sat on a chair.

“Fine. Your sophistry, I will let it pass.”

“Thank you for doing so.”

Jo MInjoon poured maple syrup on a pancake that had butter on top of it. The butter, which was suitably melted because of the warm hot cake, slowly spread that liquid. The aroma of the maple syrup and butter faced the aroma for a moment, and then flowed to the entire pancake. Kaya looked at that with vague eyes and said.

“Mom didn’t cook for us that much. She normally made us eat cheese or ham in its normal state. It wasn’t because my mom is bad, but because she wouldn’t have the strength. How tired would she have been? But one of the dishes that mom of mine made for me was a pancake. It’s easy and simple.”

“Did you like it? The pancake.”

“I wonder. I don’t know. Actually, I may have hated it. Sometimes it seemed like my life was reflected on top of that

pancake. But I understand it now. I'm looking at this pancake now.....I feel sad for nothing. I want to see my mom."

Kaya talked like that and served one pancake to her dish. As she sliced the pancake as if it was meat and put it in her mouth, the aroma of the butter and the unique sweet flavor of the maple syrup was felt as if it melted inside the pancake. She smiled brightly.

"Try this. It's delicious."

"It's something I just thought of, but this is quite unfamiliar."

"What is?"

"That I'm at the same table as Kaya Lotus. Do you remember when we first met? No, when we first spoke. Back then we were standing on edges."

"Why are you talking about the past. So boring."

"I just got that thought. Just like you think of your mother when looking at the pancake, I can also remember the past in this table."

Kaya scratched the part of the pancake that was a bit scorched with her fork and without saying anything. Jo Minjoon sliced the pancake that had cheese and ham in it and gave it to Kaya.

"You have to eat cheese before it hardens."

"Where did the person that said that we should leave it to rest go?"

"That was the Jo Minjoon of a few minutes ago, and not the Jo Minjoon right now."

"Ha, how comfortable. Those words."

Jo Minjoon smirked and put the crepe in his mouth. Six points. It wasn't particularly outstanding, but even so, the score was quite fine just by being faithful to the basics. And it was also delicious. First, as the quality of the cheese itself was good, while the aroma of the cheese spread stickily the flavor felt of the ham was sensed more clearly. There was nothing to say about the elasticity of the

crepe. Looking at Kaya slurping the stretched cheese like noodles, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth slowly.

“If there’s something difficult, you can tell me anytime.”

“.....Why are you telling me that so suddenly?”

“I can say it whenever. There’s the thing I heard through the phone last time, that you had some troubles.”

Kaya just looked at the crepe and the cheese that was stretched between her mouth. Slurp. Kaya cut off the cheese with a kissing sound. She shook her head with a bitter smile.

“How many difficult moments are there in the world? I don’t want to say it all to you every time. I already told you last time.”

“I didn’t tell you to tell me everything. If it’s really hard to endure, I would like it if you told me only then.”

“Okay. I will if it gets really difficult. But now is not the time. It’s not that hard yet. It’s a bit exhausting physically. But it’s because I couldn’t sleep all night because of someone.”

“Weren’t you the only one. I also feel sleepy right now.”

“Do you want to sleep?Ah, I know that expression of yours. You thought of something weird.”

At Kaya’s sleepy eyes, Jo Minjoon turned his eyes away and coughed as if something got stuck in his throat. Jo Minjoon hurriedly opened his mouth while flushing.

“Th-think what? Leave it, just tell me what you have planned from now on. What are you planning to do after the schedules of Grand Chef ends?”

“I don’t know. For now, Rachel’s proposal will be one of my options. What do you want me to do.”

“.....It’s obvious. I would like it if you came with me. To Teacher Rachel’s restaurant. It will certainly be a good time for you too. Teacher Rachel....She’s someone that’s not easy to grasp.”

“Looking that you keep calling her teacher, it does seem that she’s somewhat amazing.....”

Kaya dimmed her last words. She was looking at Jo Minjoon’s back with awkward eyes. Jo Minjoon followed her eyes to his back. And then gulped down immediately. Behind them, Sera and Anderson were looking at them as if it was absurd. Anderson asked.

“Is it delicious when you eat between yourselves?”

—

Kaya and Jo Minjoon talking alone didn’t become the topic of the group. And that’s not because it wasn’t funny. Emily, who went out to escort Alan, didn’t return until the sun rose.

“Did you spend a good time?”

“Ugh, don’t tease me! Nothing happened.”

Emily flushed at that one question and answered. It was similar to when Jo Minjoon spent the night with Kaya.

But in Jo Minjoon and Kaya’s case, they couldn’t put much attention to Emily’s incident. The time for the airport was close. And the time they could be together wasn’t that long. That’s why while they were on the bus that was going to the airport they stuck close to each other as if they were lovebirds and didn’t separate.

But even so, you couldn’t tie down the flow of time. Kaya’s flight was faster than theirs, and Jo Minjoon could only send her off in front of the departure control. He said with a deafened voice.

“Have a nice trip.”

“.....When will we be able to meet?”

“I don’t know. I just hope to meet faster.”

“There’s something I want to say. And it feels like I have to. Although you may say what it is already.”

Kaya tried her luck like that. It wasn't difficult to grasp what that meant. But it wasn't only about Jo Minjoon. Looking at Kaya's worried expression, you could know what her mouth wanted to say even if you were a 3-year-old kid.

"But I don't think this is the right situation. When our situation gets organized a bit more calmly, then.....I want to say it then. And I think that will be the next time we meet."

"Then, do I only have to hold my hands together and wait?"

"I wonder. There's no need to hold your hands but I think that it would be good to brush your teeth."

At Kaya's words, Jo Minjoon replied with a smile.

"Well, I will also whiten my teeth then."

When he finished saying that, Kaya hugged Jo Minjoon. Although the camera was recording, she didn't mind. As they had shown everything to show. If they didn't have that moment's hug, they felt that the regret in their hearts would become too deep.

There was no conversation. Because everything you couldn't express with words was done by that hug instead.

"I will leave then."

Those were the last words. Kaya walked to the departure control and then disappeared in the line. Jo Minjoon slowly turned back. Kaya kept walking her own path. She had to. Jo Minjoon took out his flight ticket from his chest and looked at it. Hunger trip. The last destination was written in hard handwriting.

Chapter 144: The Hands Of A Master (1)

If the Western Union had to choose the most popular dish in Asia, most of the people would pick Japanese food after a short while of thinking. Although the neat flavor was a bit weak to be the favorite dish, it was the most suitable as food that everyone liked more than everywhere.

Jo Minjoon basically liked noodles, so obviously liked ramen. Honestly, just looking at the elasticity, udon was more charming. But there weren't many udon stores where they properly melted the flavor of the stock to the noodles.

Actually, it was an unavoidable part. The noodles of udon were much thicker compared to ramen, and it was difficult to make the stock sip in the noodles if you weren't skilled. Of course, if you cooked it for long it was unavoidable for the stock to sip in it, but the elasticity would suffer. Although the story would change a little based on the ratio of the ingredients with the dough and fermentation time, but even if that was the case it could only be weaker than ramen.

That's why he liked ramen more than udon. It was important to be simple, but what he liked the most was that several flavors of ingredients fitted in like a puzzle, and the result was the simplicity of it. He thought that when ingredients, such as stock and fragrant grasses, char siu and green bean sprouts, green onions, etc. met together with noodles, there was nothing that could follow that.

But even while liking ramen that much, what was in Jo Minjoon's head right now was sushi. Precisely speaking, dishes related to fish. The reason was simple.

‘3.11 Great Earthquake.’

This earthquake, which was called the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake, hadn't passed for more than half a year. After that, several ingredients that came from Japan that was exposed to

radioactivity could only make you doubt about the ingredients. After some years, the Japanese government said that it didn't affect your body at all, but honestly speaking it was difficult to believe those words.

The last opportunity to eat the founding sushi in the freshest state. After a bit of time passed, even if you had money and power, you wouldn't be able to have this meal if not for now.

‘I would have to eat a lot of fish.’

Saliva gathered in his mouth. Grilled Atka mackerel, hard-boiled codfish in soy sauce, sushi, etc. It also comforted him that he would be able to eat food with proper white rice in a while. After Grand Chef ended, he stayed in Korea for a while, but after that, he hadn't been able to eat a proper meal that had white rice and side dishes.

“It feels like you are really expecting it. You seem to be in a better mood than when we went to Olive Island?”

Morning. Anderson looked at him while leaving Tokyo Airport as if it was amazing. Jo Minjoon smiled and said.

While leaving Tokyo Airport, Anderson looked at him as if it was amazing.

“You will probably remember this trip for quite a long while.”

“Why. Because we came for the broadcast?”

“Wait. You will realize it when time comes.”

Jo Minjoon answered with a bitter voice. He felt regret that there was nothing he could do even while knowing that the great earthquake was going to happen. But even so, if he said ‘In March of next year, a great earthquake is going to occur, so evacuate.’ how many crazy people would take his words for granted?

He didn't return to the past to become a hero or an oracle. Although it hurt his heart, it was now time to focus on cooking and

the broadcast. Jo Minjoon turned to look at Martin and asked.

“So how are we going to proceed today?”

“It’s simple. You are going to pair up and go to wherever you want. You don’t have to worry about the meal fees.”

“You are rather generous today.”

“Japan is a leisurely country.”

At Martin’s words, Jo Minjoon glanced at his surroundings. Looking at the road filled with cars, perhaps because it was working time, he couldn’t agree to Martin’s words. Martin continued saying with a calm face.

“Consult among yourselves and make pairs. I won’t butt in.”

Right after Martin finished speaking, Jo Minjoon’s head and Anderson’s head turned. It was Rachel. Next, to her, Jeremy grumbled with a depressed face.

“Even when I get old, it seems like I’m not the type to be popular.”

“Ey, why are you like this. Jeremy. Come with me.”

“Hoho, Will this old man be enough?”

“The experience of an epicurean doesn’t go along with age. I want to feel mine and Jeremy’s experience today.”

Emily smiled brightly and crossed arms with Jeremy. Sera looked at that Emily and smirked.

“To cross arms with another man. Alan would hate it if he saw this.”

“Alan isn’t that small..... In the first place, what does Alan have to do with this?”

Alan was about to reply instinctively but then glared at her. Sera shrugged her shoulders and turned to look at Jo Minjoon and Anderson. She extended her arms and said with a playful voice.

“One of you two, quickly go away and court me. Rachel. Reject anyone quickly.”

“Hmm.....”

Rachel looked at Anderson and Jo Minjoon with a careful face. But she didn't think for long. She looked at Anderson with a sorry look.

“Anderson. I want to experience Minjoon's tasting this time. How about spending this day with a younger and more beautiful lady than me?”

“Yes. I understand.”

Anderson looked a bit sad, but he didn't say unnecessary remarks and nodded immediately. Rebelling against Rachel's words was something unimaginable for him. Sera crossed her arms and raised the corner of her mouth.

“It would have been good if you came to me in the first place, right?”

“.....Let's go.”

As Anderson's and Emily's team disappeared, naturally only Jo Minjoon and Rachel and the cameramen in charge of them along with some staff remained. Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel and asked.

“Teacher. Is there somewhere you recommend?”

“Hm, I wonder. Actually, the restaurants that are in Japan are mostly European restaurants.....At times like this, you have to believe in your feet and nose. How about walking and going somewhere that smells delicious?”

“But in the case of sushi stores, it only smells fishy.”

“You want to eat sushi huh?”

“.....Actually, yes, I'm curious. How does sushi made in Japan taste? There were some people in Korea called sushi masters, but those places were so expensive I couldn't even think of going.”

“There may also be that, but isn’t it also because you thought that sushi is all the same?”

At Rachel’s smile that was like she knew everything, Jo Minjoon put on an embarrassed smile and nodded.

“Actually it is also like that. In the end, sushi is only about the flavor of the ingredients and rice.....I also wonder if there’s a clear difference on how the master grips. How do you think teacher?”

“Minjoon. Do you remember what I said last time? That for the food to become delicious, you have to put your heart in it.”

“Yes.”

“If you believe that things you can’t see with your eyes, just like your heart, can change the flavor. Slicing and gripping..... Doesn’t this make things more believable that the long experience can change the flavor?”

Listening to it like that, it seemed acceptable. But he couldn’t think that the method of grasping the rice and slicing the fish is an amazing variable to change the cooking score.

It seemed like those thoughts showed up on his face. Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon with soft eyes and then slightly pinched his cheeks. Jo Minjoon didn’t evade her hand. Rachel seemed like her real grandmother but also aside of that, he felt flustered by whatever Rachel did. Just like his role model and friend Kaya became his comrade, Rachel was a person that was enough for his admiration that lost direction to go to head towards to.

“Let’s go eat something for now. However much I say it with words, it’s not comparable to eating once.”

“You said that you didn’t know anywhere in particular.”

“That’s why we have to find somewhere.”

The place they headed to was a residential street a bit away from the main streets. There were some restaurants that entered your

eyes among the streets, and Martin opened his mouth quite some times and told them about old restaurants. There were places that were standing for 50 years and some that boasted its history of 100 years.

While looking that, Jo Minjoon couldn't hide his envy. Because it was difficult to find a 100-year-old restaurant in Korea. After the war of 6.25, several restaurants cut off their history, but there were also many cases of restaurants that closed their doors because there was no one to follow its legacy. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Looking that restaurants with long history close its door makes me feel really regrettable.”

“Nowadays there are many cases that they passed on their restaurants to their disciples rather than their kids.”

Rachel spoke like that and looked at Jo Minjoon with a very meaningful face. As the weight in that eyes was too heavy, Jo Minjoon unconsciously ended up turning his eyes away. Rachel laughed softly and asked.

“If I plan to make you my successor, are you confident on being able to carry it on?”

“No. I'm not.”

It was a really blunt answer. Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon with harsh eyes as if reproving him for his lack of confidence. Jo Minjoon spoke carefully.

“I'm like that now. I'm still lacking. But if Teacher Rachel teaches me all that I lack.....even if I have to stay awake all nights, I will make all of that mine. So teach me a lot.”

“.....You are unexpectedly shrewd. In the end, your skills lie in my doings? Ahaha. Good. Challenges are always good even if you get old.”

Rachel laughed freshly and said. And Jo Minjoon stopped his

steps. Even while speaking, he was looking at the small signs placed in the restaurants. Even if he didn't go in, he could see the cooking score of the dishes.

In the cases of sushi stores, even if they were good most of them were at a limit of 6. It wasn't because they lacked the ability, but because the sushi was basically a simple dish. Then, the guide whispered something in Martin's ear. Martin soon pointed at the store and said.

“For your information, they say that that store is a 170-year-old store.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon turned his head and then put on a strange expression. Looking at the walls built with windowpanes, and the overall composition it was hard to see that it was 170 years old.

“But the building is rather new.”

“They say that the original building was too old so they had to rebuild it.”

“Mmm.....”

Jo Minjoon let out a moan. It didn't matter how the building was. But the system window he saw beyond the windows was incomprehensible. There were many dishes that stopped at a cooking score of 5 and he barely saw 7-point dishes, but just like it said, it was bare. Even if sushi was simple, it was a really low score for it to come from a 170-year-old store. Most of all.

‘.....The quality is not good?’

Intermediate. He couldn't see high. All of the qualities of the sushis were intermediate. Jo Minjoon looked at the expressions of the people and opened his mouth.

“But this store, does it have a good reputation? Compared to its history I think that the quality isn't good.”

“.....Can you know that just by looking at its appearance?”

“Yes. In my eyes, they seem to use intermediate quality fish.”

Martin put a surprised face and then started to talk with the guide. The guide put on a confused face and tilted his head and then grabbed his cell phone and started to search. And then opened his mouth with a surprised expression.

“Ah, certainly the reputation became quite bad in the recent few weeks. The son of the last boss started to run the kitchen, but it seems like he has a lot of lacking points. I’m sorry. It’s been awhile since I didn’t go over there, so I haven’t realized the situation.”

At those words, Martin, the staff, and the cameramen all looked at Jo Minjoon with surprised faces. Rachel nodded with a proud face.

“You certainly have a good understanding towards food. It’s not easy to grasp the state of fish just with your eyes. It seems like you studied a lot.”

“Rather than study....I think I have good senses.”

“There’s no need to act that humble. Efforts end up showing up.”

Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon and put on a smile that wasn’t enough being commendable but also lovely. Jo Minjoon saw that face and ended up laughing unconsciously. Although there was a bit of a misunderstanding in the situation, there was no way he couldn’t feel good when she showed that much of goodwill. Rachel opened her mouth.

“As you are this well-versed, I will be able to entrust choosing the restaurant to Minjoon. Then, pre-teacher, will you escort me?”

“I will do my best.”

Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and slightly lifted his elbow. Rachel placed her hand on that arm and slowly moved. If only they weren’t from different races, they would have been seen as mother

and son with quite a good relationship. They were friendly to that point.

He checked the insides of the kitchen through the window one by one. Of course, there were cases that he couldn't see the score over the dishes because there were no customers, but in the first place, there was no way a restaurant with no customers would be a delicious one.

It was then. Jo Minjoon, that walked for a bit, stopped in front of a store. There were quite a lot of customers, but there were many like this among the ones they passed over. However, Jo Minjoon's sight was precisely fixed over the dishes. Most were 7 points. On top of that, there was also one sushi with a score of 8. Jo Minjoon unconsciously burst out of laughter.

‘Egg sushi huh.’

“Let's enter here.”

“Does it seem different to the other places?”

“Yes. The quality is good, and most of all the shape of the rice and the texture of the fish certainly seems alive.”

Honestly speaking, the last words were just to moderately praise. Because he couldn't say ‘the cooking score is high. Let's enter.’. But at that moment, the guide whispered something to Martin with a surprised face.

“That store is a comparatively new sushi store. Only people that know about it come. I know that someone who was in charge of Japanese cuisine in a hotel of Shanghai was running it. The reputation is so good it's a candidate to enter the Michelin. No, but who is that person? Even if he was someone strongly familiar with Japanese sushi, I couldn't see anyone that could grasp the quality with their eyes like that.....”

The guide looked at Jo Minjoon as if scrutinizing him. Martin and the guide looked at Jo Minjoon, and Martin mumbled

enjoyingly.

“He’s the cooking fairy that god Gave me.”

Chapter 145: The Hands Of A Master (2)

Putting aside the staring of the guide, Jo Minjoon and Rachel slowly entered the store. The walls were white, and the store gave a refreshing feel due to the bright wooden planks nailed like frames on the floor.

“Irasshaimase!”

The workers yelled with an energetic voice. Rachel and Jo Minjoon didn't know how to speak Japanese, but even so, they understood that those were welcoming words.

The restaurant, which wasn't that wide, was filled with quite a lot of customers. It was a bit difficult for all of the staff to enter. The worker also looked at their numbers and the cameras and put on a disapproving face. The worker then started to converse with Martin through the guide. After a while, Martin said.

“It seems like it is difficult for all of the staff to enter. First Rachel and Minjoon, the two of you go in..... I will hold the camera.”

Martin spoke like that and after receiving a small hand recorder through the staff, he smiled brightly. The three of them went to a table right next to the kitchen where the chefs were standing at, and had a bar-like shape. As they sat down, a man that seemed to be in his fifties opened his mouth.

“You are foreigners. Did you come to sightsee?”

Although it was filled with a Japanese dialect, there was no problem understanding it. Rachel smiled softly and opened her mouth.

“We are broadcasting while sightseeing.”

“To work and rest at the same time, you would feel quite weird. I am Yamamoto Kenji. You can just call me Yamamoto.”

“Ah, Rachel Rose.”

“I’m Jo Minjoon.”

“I thought you were Japanese, but you were Korean.”

Yamamoto looked at Jo Minjoon for a moment as if it was unexpected. Jo Minjoon also looked at him. No, precisely speaking, he looked at his stats. Cooking level 7. Honestly speaking, compared to the average, it wasn’t that amazing.

But while thinking that more than half of the dishes he had made was sushi, he didn’t know if that level was amazing or not. Perhaps, if he could see his skill window he would have been able to see a phrase like ‘Comprehension towards sushi – mastery 85%’. Jo Minjoon slightly opened his mouth.

“There was something I wished to eat the first, will it be okay?”

“If there’s something you want, we make it on the spot.”

“What I want is egg sushi.”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, Rachel looked at him as if she couldn’t understand. It was a famous saying that if you wanted to know the level of a sushi store, you had to eat egg sushi. However, didn’t Jo Minjoon judge that he was going to enter this restaurant after looking at the texture of the fish? Then, there was no need to eat egg sushi to know the level.

But the reaction of Yamamoto that followed next to that made Rachel a bit surprised.

“You are lucky. Actually, real regular customers always eat at least one egg sushi when they come.”

“Egg sushi? Is it special compared to other places?”

“What will there be? I was just loyal to the basics.”

“Mm.....Give me one, too.”

“Yes, I understand.”

Egg sushi wasn't made on the spot. While placing an egg sushi, soy sauce, and ginger on the tray, Yamamoto said with a voice.

“We don't give more than one egg sushi to a customer. There are many that find it, but the amount we can make on a day is limited. And there are several people that come late and are not able to eat it.”

As he spoke like that, it already made their mouths nervous. Jo Minjoon looked at the egg sushi.

[Egg sushi]

Freshness: 93%

Origin: (Hidden because there are too many ingredients)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 8/10

There was no difference in the score he saw from outside. But when he saw it from closer, amazement came out of its own. The moist inside meat, which was as smooth as if it was cut with a ruler, showed itself and the exterior was showing a pretty brown color as if it was a well-cooked caster. That texture wasn't rough but smooth. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“It just seems like grated Sapporo.”

“When cooking egg rolls, if you maintain the temperature of the pan balanced, the exterior of the egg is also cooked smoothly. To do that, we cook the egg on a pan that was slowly heated with straw fire.

Jo Minjoon put the egg sushi in his mouth. As he put it in his mouth, there was no such thing as flavor magic. However, the juice that flowed out when it was crushed by the ceiling of the mouth, teeth, and tongue seeped through the pores of their tongue.

[You have grasped the egg sushi recipe of Yamamoto!]

‘This flavor.....it’s crazy.’

It was so stimulative that he couldn’t even see the alarm of the system.

In the other hand, Yamamoto was looking how Jo Minjoon and Rachel ate. In Jo Minjoon’s case, he made the egg touch his tongue, and Rachel tilted the sushi so she could touch the egg and the rice with her tongue at the same time. Yamamoto said with a calm voice.

“Miss Rachel is the type to perfectly investigate a flavor when you feel it.”

“Are you saying that because of how I tilted it?”

“Yes. People that want to feel all the flavor a sushi has favors doing that. In the other hand, people that want to fall in the flavor deeply chooses Mr. Minjoon’s method.”

“You are a funny person. As an answer, may I analyze this egg roll?”

“And what you want to analyze is.....?”

Yamamoto looked at Jo Minjoon with an interesting face. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and replied.

“I was wondering if I was able to say what was in this egg roll. Actually, the two of us are chefs.”

“I knew that from the start. The scars in your hands are the ones from chefs. Get the ingredients right.....If it’s a path of fun for the customer, I will do anything. However, it will be quite difficult to get it right.”

A confident smile appeared on Yamamoto’s face. There were many people that tried to get the cooking method for this egg roll right. On top of that, there were even people that kept coming to this store for several months to eat the one sushi per day.

It wasn’t a recipe this young youth could grasp after a bite. At

that thought, Yamamoto looked at that youth. But after a while, Yamamoto's eyes couldn't help but shake.

“Oil and stock. First, it seems like it's these two things that are different from other places.”

He got it right immediately. But Yamamoto didn't get astounded. He soon replied with a calm voice.

“If there's something you can find a difference on an egg roll it will be just that. Isn't it kind of obvious? That much.....”

“Yes. It may be obvious. Then, am I able to carve in deeper?”

Yamamoto hesitated for a moment. The moment he said that it was okay, he felt that the methods of cooking the egg roll for tens of years would be revealed in an instant. But there was no way that would happen. However sensitive a tongue of a person was, it was impossible to grasp the composition with just tasting it once. Yamamoto soon calmed his heart and answered.

“Do it however much you want if you can.”

“Chestnut oil and pine nut oil.”

Jo Minjoon answered immediately. Yamamoto's face hardened. Jo Minjoon continued saying with a calm voice.

“There's nine-parts pine nut oil and one-part chestnut oil. You mixed the two and cooked the egg over the mixed oil. After beating each egg, you put... half a spoon of stock. Should I also say the composition of the stock?”

Yamamoto couldn't answer immediately. No, he didn't have the mind to do so. He could understand sensing the aroma of the chestnut oil and pine nut oil because it was easy. But getting the ratio and the amount of stock in one egg right was something he couldn't even imagine. Yamamoto looked at his surroundings with a trembling voice.

“This.....Is it something like a hidden camera?”

“No. It’s just a normal restaurant visiting program.”

“Then just how.....This doesn’t make sense.”

“He has an absolute sense of taste.”

Rachel answered with a calm voice. At those words, Yamamoto looked at Rachel and Jo Minjoon with round eyes. Yamamoto said with a trembling voice.

“He can know everything he eats, does that mean this?”

“Yes. This kid is quite famous in America. I also know that he’s quite famous in the next country, Korea.”

It didn’t take long for the chaos in Yamamoto’s face to change to expectation and excitement. He didn’t have any reasons to not believe in it. If that was a lie, how would he be able to get the recipe right so easily?

Rather than getting angry, he felt his chest boil. Painters need people that understand their drawings, and chefs also need people to precisely taste their food. Yamamoto said with a voice filled with ambition.

“If that really is true.....Can you tell me what kind of feeling my egg sushi gave you?”

“It was delicious. For now, I can certainly tell you that. It was good to the point that I wondered if there was sushi better than this one. The texture was funny maybe because of the rice grains that were placed flatly.....and the egg was really soft and moist as a caster wet in the egg. It was a good sushi. I want to quickly eat the next one.....”

“Ah, yes. Of course. But before that, eat one ginger.”

“Are you talking about this?”

Jo Minjoon turned his head. The thin ginger was placed on a small plate. Yamamoto nodded.

“It weakens flavors, and it’s a simmered ginger that strengthens

the aroma of ginger. When you eat sushi with a mouth that has eaten that, you will feel the flavor to be really different.”

Jo Minjoon and Rachel grabbed one ginger each and ate it. Rachel said while being amazed.

“It’s not at the level that it weakens the previous flavor. Only elegance remains in my mouth, and I feel like it cleans up the sweet and sour flavor from my mouth.”

“It’s not only that. The vinegar doesn’t seem to be a normal one. Sudachi. There’s sudachi juice in it. And it’s not a normal one at that..... But a slightly less ripe sudachi with a stronger flavor. Am I wrong?”

Yamamoto’s mouth trembled and rose. He had thrown away his doubts before, but as he spoke like this the certainness in Jo Minjoon’s taste became even deeper. You could figure out that it was sudachi. But how could you know that it wasn’t completely ripe? But of course, he used a less ripe sudachi because of the difference in flavors, but it was to the point that he got goosebumps at Jo Minjoon’s taste getting that right.

‘It’s not something I should think about a customer but.....a monster has appeared in my kitchen.’

He didn’t feel this to be real to the point that he wondered if perhaps he was a nine-tailed fox. But if it was a dream, it was good by its own. He wanted to get an opinion from the monster that had an absolute sense of taste.

Yamamoto opened his mouth.

“There are many conditions for a good sushi. Fish suitable for each season, quality, careful care, and delicate kniving; as well as delicious rice grains and well-split wasabi. Will you try this wasabi?”

Wasabi the size of a grain was placed in Jo Minjoon’s and Rachel’s dishes. It was when they were waiting for the pain of the

spicy flavor that was soon to come and put the wasabi in their mouths. Jo Minjoon's eyes became big. It was sweet. It certainly was wasabi, but he felt like he just had put cream with sugar in his mouth. Of course, after a while, the sharp spicy flavor pinched his nose, but the shock of the sweet flavor was too deep.

“The wasabi.....is sweet. What happened?”

“Looking at how you speak, it seems like you haven't gone to a good sushi store. An industrial one and a handmade one is completely different. And there are cases that restaurants mix rice powder, starch, etc. in the wasabi. But wasabi of good quality can give a deep flavor like this just with grating it well. Of course.”

Yamamoto raised a steel sheet. It was a steel sheet that looked like it was made with the leather of something. On top of that, when he put chili in it and slowly turned it clockwise, the wasabi started to grate down softly without any sound.

“The direction and strength of grating are also important. Because the moment you damage the structure, the flavor scatters.”

“.....Does flavor vary that much with something that simple?”

“Look at the faces of the people. When the eyes are longer by a rice grain length, the look changes. Wasabi and sushi are the same. If it's fine, may I recommend you the next sushis?”

“Ah, yes. I will be asking you.”

As soon as Yamamoto got the permission, he took out a tunny from a side. The side had soot as if it was cooked with direct fire, and the other side had the meat intact as if it was just cooked with smoke.

“It's tunny cooked in a straw fire, just like they did it in the Edo era. Tunny is a fish with a lot of blood, so it's hard to completely erase the fishy smell. That's why we catch the smell of the tunny with the smoke of the straw fire.”

Yamamoto's sashimi knife calmly split the skin of the tunny. How sharply was the knife sharpened that the part of the skin was about to crumble but didn't? The sashimi knife sliced the tunny without any resistance just like it was slicing butter.

The next was the normal step. He put water in his hands and gripped the rice with the shape of an arc. He smeared wasabi in the tunny and gripped it along with rice to make the shape of a pretty fan.

‘.....8 points.’

He thought that only the egg sushi was going to be like that, but it seemed like that wasn't the case. Perhaps it was because, different from the other sushis, it had met fire so it had more process for the score to raise. It was when Jo Minjoon extended his fingers to grab the sushi placed on the dish. Yamamoto shook his head.

“You can't eat it yet. You have to wait until the temperature of the rice and the fish becomes similar to each other. This temperature is really important. This is how people that eat sushi right in front of the kitchen and people that receive dishes in the hall feel different flavors even while eating the same sushi. That's why personally, I feel stifled when looking at places that sell assorted sushi. When you make it like that, you will never be able to feel the real flavor of sushi. Ah, you can eat it now. Personally, I recommend eating it with the rice facing it downwards. It's slow, but it's the method you can feel the flavor of sushi more clearly.”

Jo Minjoon extended his hand. Maybe it was a consideration that he was right handed that the angle of the sushi was perfect for him to grab it comfortably. It was then that he put the sushi in his mouth.

The soy sauce, that was at the end of the rice, spread over his tongue, and the smoked tunny meat and grilled part of the skin poured various flavors in an instant. On top of that, when added

the sweet and spicy flavor of wasabi, and the unique flavor of rice.....It was to the point that you wondered if you were able to melt in more flavors than this in one bite. The cooking score was 8. But the flavor wasn't a simple 8.

‘Is this.....the strength of a master that worked in only one field.’

He had always thought of this. A western chef that didn't stand in the work himself but regularized the general flow. Using Korea as an example, a chef that spent all their life in only one field like kalguksu (칼국수) or rice soup(국밥), and in Japan udon, ramen, etc. Among them, who would be able to present a more ideal flavor?

At a time he thought that the latter would be much better. Because he thought that even if he managed as a head chef, it would be difficult to put in displays his skills if he didn't grab the pan himself. But he changed his thought when he met Rachel. She made him realize that as long as there is a head chef, all the members in their kitchen are no different than the hands of the head chef themselves.

However, Yamamoto's sushi threw him at that question again. Although his cooking level was 7, it wasn't only that for sushi. 8, or perhaps 9. Kniving and fire, and maintenance of ingredients or handling rice and wasabi. In each and every one of that, it was difficult to control the delicacy. It was an art that had a whole life melted in it.

‘If I can make all of that mine.....’

Greed made him famished.

Chapter 146: The Hands Of A Master (3)

“Hard work.....Really doesn't betray.”

Jo Minjoon, that was savoring the lingering flavor of the sushi in his mouth for quite a while opened his mouth, and then Yamamoto said with a nice smile.

“There's a saying for sushi. Someone with mediocre abilities that made sushi for 50 years makes it more deliciously than a genius that has made it for 49 years. But of course, sayings like these are just listened to, there are many cases that they aren't proved. However, I think that it may really be true. One year.....no, me from one month ago is different from me right now.”

“I think I understand that. I'm also a chef even if I have short experience.”

Him, before starting Grand Chef, and him of right now was different. It was merely half a year but how much had his level risen by? While nodding his head thinking like that, Rachel said with a calm voice.

“It is like that for technique. If you have sensitive senses, although you may be fast on starting to walk later on it can only be difficult. Experience accumulates as much as you have sweated regardless of talent. If sushi, udon, bread, etc. are things that only masters have to work on it from start to end, something like talent won't be that big on how much it makes a difference.”

“Saying that for technique.....means that it isn't so for other parts, teacher?”

“Technique is sharpening and keep sharpening an already made knife. However, it's different when you look it as the maker. To make a knife, you need to have creativeness to make that knife to be beautiful and durable. And they also need to know how to express that to make his creativeness to make it a reality. You can't

make this up just with experience. And your tongue.....There's nothing more to say, don't you think so?"

Rachel smiled softly. Yamamoto, that was listening to their conversation, asked.

"You two.....Are you perhaps master and disciple?"

"Yes. I recently just barely made this kid my disciple."

"How can you say barely. I would have become teacher's disciple whatever happened."

"Huhu.....I feel thankful as you say it like that."

"This is new. I couldn't hold a conversation with my teacher that calmly, nor a seat in the same table. Maybe it's because you are from the west, the atmosphere is certainly different."

"Rather than being from the west.....It's because the teacher is a warm person. She treats me really well."

At Jo Minjoon's words, Rachel turned her head with an embarrassing head. Thinking about it, she wondered if it was the first time Jo Minjoon said something like this in front of her. Maybe that was why she felt warmer but she couldn't look at Jo Minjoon's eyes. Because she from the past wasn't like this. Although Kaya was also a tomboy.....

'I was worse.'

It was when Rachel smiled bitterly. Yamamoto was taking out the next fish. Jo Minjoon's eyes shone.

"It's tuna belly."

"You are right. And it's not a normal one. Can you guess what's special about it?"

"Ah. Did you slice it following the tendons? So we don't chew it."

"You got it right immediately."

Yamamoto raised his knife. It was quite amazing looking at the

sashimi knife slice the belly meat as if it was splitting water. Jo Minjoon didn't miss one movement and saved it in his eyes. The shape of his fingers when he gripped rice, how much wasabi he smeared in, up to how much does the brush twist when smearing soy sauce on the belly meat.

[You have experienced the technique of a sushi master in front of your eyes!]

[Mastery of sushi cooking has increased!]

[Your understanding of living has increased!]

A technique that made your skills increase just with watching it. Jo Minjoon just looked at the tuna belly placed in front of his eyes.

[Tuna belly sushi]

Freshness: 98%

Origin: (Hidden as there are too many ingredients.)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 7/10

7 points. It was a good score, but not to the point to admire it. However, Jo Minjoon couldn't watch this sushi in front of him lightly. Sushi basically got this score just because of the simplicity of it. Thinking about it slowly, it was a really amazing thing to get this score with just rice, wasabi, and raw fish.

And the flavor was also extraordinary. Tuna belly meat. A part that has more fat and is a soft part even among the parts of tuna that's famous for being oily. Maybe it was because he had removed the tendons that the texture was a lot softer, and every time he chewed it, the oil that came out of the fat seeped in the rice grains.

It was obvious, but Yamamoto's sushi didn't end there. Pacific saury sushi with a silver skin, an eel that was rested in soy sauce stock, louder sushi and rockfish sushi, and also octopus sushi. Several kinds of sushis appeared.

Among them, there were none that surpassed the score of 8. And for Jo Minjoon, that had a tasting level 8, he could know all of the recipes. But.....

‘Sushi is not a problem of recipes.’

How you grip it, how you raise your knife and slice the textures. Even if you know all of that in your head, if your hand’s don’t follow your will it becomes meaningless. But of course, it had plenty of worth just by stealing his know how.

“How is it.”

“.....I want it. Your hands. I also want to grip sushi like that.”

Jo Minjoon’s eyes, that were looking at Yamamoto’s hands, were burning in ambition. And when he faced those eyes, Yamamoto felt a chill in his spine.

‘They say that geniuses all have a crazy side.....This youth also has a dangerous side.’

Thinking about it, he also understood. The more sensitive your tastes are, the worth you put in cooking also becomes higher. Perhaps, his hands gripping sushi may look like jewels in Jo Minjoon’s eyes. Thinking about it, he also felt a bit happy. Because however, you put it, it meant that he wanted his abilities. Yamamoto said with a confident smile.

“I also want your tongue, but that won’t happen for eternity. However, Mr. Minjoon just has to work hard.”

“Thank you for your nice words. However, after eating this delicious sushi, honestly speaking my body can’t help but heat up. That’s cowardly. This is cowardly.”

“As I focused my whole life on just one thing, I have to be able to bring this flavor.”

Cooking only one thing for all your life. Those words were heard to be kind of cool. Right. If you focus on only one thing, no one

would be able to follow you at least for sushi. Even if Jo Minjoon becomes an excellent chef, there was no way that he would be able to make a better sushi than a chef of a sushi store as an accidental chef.

But even so, Jo Minjoon wasn't the type to be able to focus on one thing for all his life. To do so, there were too many cooking methods and ingredients that entered his eyes. He wanted to use all of that and make the ultimate result a dish could get. Although that may be the dream for all of the chefs, Jo Minjoon was a most earnest of that dream compared to others.

Perhaps, it may be because this reality of having returned to the past was just like a dream. A dream that occurred once. It may be because he was certain that a second dream could happen. Jo Minjoon turned to look at Rachel and opened her mouth.

"Teacher. I have always been curious about this. Restaurants try many dishes. But if they keep changing their menu periodically, aren't they able to carve in that menu deeply?"

"Of course."

Rachel answered with a calm voice. Jo Minjoon, that expected some solution, looked at her with a perplexed face. Rachel smiled brightly and said.

"Minjoon. To make a complete dish, there's no need to become a complete chef. Chef Yamamoto has to be like that. The start and end of a sushi are in his hands, so at least for sushi he has to be perfect."

".....Are we different?"

"We are. Dividing parts. Jobs. A restaurant is one country. If you get your assigned job done, a flawless dish would come out. Think about the many other restaurants. The bread is made by the patissier, and in the cases of noodles it's different in each case but normally they are done by excellent noodle makers. The essence of

western restaurants is the harmony of the experiences of several that occurs over a plate.”

“Then what do we have to grind and polish?”

Jo Minjoon frowned as if it was difficult. It was something he didn't try to think properly because it was usually a vague problem. And as he got to face it now, it was more complicated and huge than what he thought. Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel with thirsty eyes. Rachel opened her mouth.

“It's different based on your rank, but I will speak with a head chef as the guideline. Because in the end, you will also become a head chef. There are two big things. First, leading the kitchen. The tools, fire, the number of staff, everything has to move in your head.”

“And the second.....?”

“Imagining it.”

Rachel opened her eyes clearly and looked at Jo Minjoon. Her eyes were shining so clearly that you would think she was glaring. Rachel continued speaking.

“Imagine it. The path for your kitchen. The connections of all the people, effort, experience and imagination. In the end..... the path you have imagined will melt down on the recipe. Pull out the stimulation and emotions you felt while watching this sushi! Feel it and express it! A recipe isn't simply combining ingredients and cooking methods. When you make it with the inspiration you are feeling now is when that recipe becomes completely yours.”

Jo Minjoon's eyes became absent-minded. Tens, hundreds of thoughts flashed through his head. Jo Minjoon stood up from his seat.

“I.....will take some air.”

Rachel didn't hold him back. While looking at Jo Minjoon's back that was leaving, Yamamoto opened his mouth.

“You are a good teacher.”

“.....I’m a spoiled one. I’m pretending to be all well but perhaps I may be more urgent than that kid.”

“Why are you in a hurry?”

“I want to make that kid grow at least a day faster. It’s a funny thing. I just gave birth to a kid, but I want to already prepare the wedding.”

Rachel smiled bitterly. Yamamoto looked at that Rachel and slowly placed back his knife in his knife holder.

“Is there a parent in the world that aren’t greedy over their own kids?”

“Yes. That’s why if I am going to be greedy, I’m going to fill everything that kid has.”

“As he has that tongue, the size of his greed wouldn’t be a normal one.”

Rachel just puts on a ginger in her mouth without saying anything. She felt that the sweet and sour, the fresh and rough flavor of root vegetables slowly passed by her throat. Rachel said with a relieved voice.

“Fortunately, what I can give to that kid isn’t at a normal scale.”

—

As he got out of the kitchen, Jo Minjoon took in a deep breath. The moment the smell of dirt with air entered his nose, Jo Minjoon’s head was spinning quickly like a computer.

‘Sushi. Sushi. Dishes that use sushi.’

He couldn’t win with normal sushi. But even so, he also didn’t want to leave his recipe like sushi that couldn’t be modified. Because of that, tens and hundreds of ingredients were clashing and mixing in Jo Minjoon’s head.

“7 points. 6. 8.....Ah, no. No. This isn’t it. It can’t be a recipe of this level.”

The cameramen, that were waiting outside, looked at Jo Minjoon mumbling lowly and filmed while putting a weird face. But Jo Minjoon wasn’t aware of the cameramen and the staff that was looking at him.

If the camera could record the insides of his head instead of Jo Minjoon’s face, that would probably have been a really amazing thing to see. Three or four recipes were made and thrashed away even before he could exhale once, and the appearances and flavor of the food he thought of were clear. It was to the point that he may be able to feel it with just imagining it. And actually, saliva was accumulating in Jo Minjoon’s mouth.

“Ideal kniving. Gripping. It can’t be with just this. Shall I use fire? No, it can’t become perfect with just this. Then.....”

The endless mumbling stopped. But just because of that, it didn’t mean that Jo Minjoon got a hold of himself. His eyes were still looking at the empty air, and his lips slowly opened up. It was unavoidable. Because several windows appeared and disappeared in front of Jo Minjoon’s eyes.

And the moment the wheel stopped was about 10 minutes after Jo Minjoon started looking at the air. Jo Minjoon’s eyes, that were dim, started to find the light again. And the cameramen that were filming him got a weird thought at that moment. That they thought that Jo Minjoon could see something they couldn’t.

But that wasn’t a mistake. Because in front of Jo Minjoon’s eyes, windows only he could see had appeared.

[The estimated cooking score is 9!]

[You have thought of an estimated cooking score of 9 alone!]

[The mastery for recipe composition greatly increases!]

Chapter 147: The Hands Of A Master (4)

Jo Minjoon's hands moved to the system's window. But of course, he couldn't touch it. The recipe was a fusion. After smoking the mackerel, you apply apple juice and soy sauce and caramelize it so it becomes crispy. After applying wasabi in its insides, you place it on the rice that was cooked with apple peel.

It was quite different to the normal way of making sushi. However Jo Minjoon didn't dislike that recipe of his. He had thought a long time. Where was he going to place the nationality in his cooking. However it was already too late. Regardless of cooking food of any country, compared to the ones that had eaten and enjoyed food of that country for all their lives, he lacked too much comprehension.

Jo Minjoon's specialty was on influencing the flavor with things like pure, sauce, etc. And the method he preferred the most was saving the flavor of the main ingredient. Be it on sauces and on fishes. And if it was the method he had thought right now, he would be able to mix in the fruit and the fish.

But of course, it may be difficult on the point that you would have to slice the sushi to a suitable size. Although the system didn't tell him what would be the most ideal shape, applying that to his hands was another problem.

“.....Are you okay?”

Although it was rare for the staff to talk, they could only get worried. He was looking at the air and mumbling alone, but soon his frown melted down to become a smile.

Absolute taste. Although they knew that he was a person with a talent that could remain in history, it was the first time they felt it to be so unfamiliar and distant. Jo Minjoon slowly turned his head. The staff that spoke to Jo Minjoon flinched momentarily and trembled. You could see joy inside his brown eyes.

“Really fine.....!”

Jo Minjoon answered with a trembling voice and soon entered the kitchen. Rachel was already standing up as if she had finished speaking. Jo Minjoon spoke with a regretful voice.

“Ah, are we leaving now?”

“We have to. We also have other things to try.”

“Then wait a moment please. I have something I want to tell to mr. Yamamoto.”

“Are you talking about me?”

“Yes. Do you have something to write?”

Yamamoto gave Jo Minjoon a paper and a pen. Jo Minjoon wrote down the recipes he thought of just now. Rachel looked at that Jo Minjoon. Had he composed those recipes in that short time? Rachel got amazed inwardly.

‘His taste is one thing.....But for his head to spin this quickly is also amazing.’

Actually, even in the kitchen, talent wasn’t any different. How good was their heads. Calculating the movements of the people in the kitchen, taking care of the orders that got accumulated, and composing a new dish..... If you were intelligent in all of those aspects, the more intelligent you were the more favorable it became.

While Martin turned his camera to the recipe, Yamamoto slowly read that and opened his eyes abruptly while looking at Jo Minjoon.

“Isn’t this.....a recipe?”

“It’s a recipe I got inspired while eating your sushi. I think that rather than having it in my head, it would be better if one day you cook it.”

“Apple tree with apple juices.....I don’t know how it will become,

but I'm expecting the flavor."

"I think that it may be the best recipe I have thought in all my life."

"Originally, the workpiece people make in the current day tends to be of a higher level than something they made the day before. Thank you for entrusting this kid to me."

Yamamoto smiled brightly and then folded up the paper gently and placed it in his pocket. Rachel turned to look at Jo Minjoon and said.

"You thought of that recipe in that short while?"

"Uh.....Originally you think of it in an instant. Yamamoto's sushi stimulated me a lot. If I had to make it alone i would have been difficult."

"There's no need to speak humbly. You did well. Make all of the inspiration you receive from the places we go, yours. Perhaps, that may be deeper and bigger than what your teacher teaches you."

"Yes."

Jo Minjoon was in a good mood. It was when they were about to leave. Yamamoto opened his mouth.

"Did you decide somewhere to go?"

"No. We are about to enter a place that seemed to be fine while walking. We also came here like that."

"If it's fine with you, I would like to recommend you a store....."

"What kind of store?"

".....It's a store that's really difficult to say what kind of store it is. You could look at it as a japanese restaurant, but the range of it is too wide to only call it japanese.....You will really be able to see many dishes. Originally, it's somewhere I want to keep it by myself.....but the person there will welcome you."

Honestly speaking, Jo Minjoon didn't hear Yamamoto's proposal to be that sweet. The reason was simple. 'Many dishes.' It was right after he got excited after eating Yamamoto's sushi. He was curious about other masters that poured all their time in one field just like udon and ramen. If it wasn't even a restaurant but cooked several dishes.....He wondered how deep that level would be. Jo Minjoon took the rough map that was drawn by Yamamoto and smiled brightly.

"If the situation permits us, that will also be fine. Thanks for the recommendation. And also, thank you for the sushi. It was the best I have tried in all my life."

"I'm still lacking. If you come again one day, I will show you a better sushi."

At Yamamoto's humble answer, Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and turned back. When Jo Minjoon followed Rachel and got out, the youngest PD Robert said.

"Did you get good scenes?"

"Obviously. Think about it. Who do you think the hottest member in our program is?"

".....I wonder. Minjoon is also quite popular, but thinking about the overall famousness isn't it certainly Rachel?"

"See? The members you are wondering about who is the hottest are all here. And think a bit more. It's only been half a year since Minjoon appeared on TV. But even so, his existence became comparable to that of Rachel's."

Martin looked at Rachel that was smiling and conversing with Jo Minjoon. Although he had let it pass as they were always together, thinking about the real worth that man had.....he got goosebumps. Martin said.

"Don't you feel dread? If his first step is this much, what kind of meaning will that man have later on the cooking world."

“Well, he will become a legend. There are always legends.”

“Legends are only a memory. But he won’t end with just being a memory.”

“Then what will happen.”

“Everyone will want to catch Minjoon. They would want to resemble his imagination and philosophy. Right! He.....”

Martin’s mouth trembled. It wasn’t even his job, but thinking about the day that would soon come, his chest melted down in fluster.

“He will become an order.”

—

Although there were no eternal things, it didn’t take that long for the emotions the sushi Yamamoto gave him to disappear. Because an amazing dish that made him forget about Yamamoto’s sushi was placed in front of Jo Minjoon. The unfortunate thing was that it didn’t have a positive meaning but a negative one.

‘Do I eat it all or not?’

Jo Minjoon glared at the plate in front of him. The place Jo Minjoon and Rachel were seated at was at a covered cart bar. Although there were no customers, it wasn’t strange as the place was small. Although he couldn’t see the cooking score Rachel wanted to come here after feeling the faint romantic feeling the cart bar gave her on the street.....And Jo Minjoon couldn’t decline her. And this was the situation.

“Is it fine?”

“.....You know what kind of answer I will give. I’m sorry. I think I brought you for nothing.”

Different from yamamoto, the owner of the store wasn’t fluent in english. Could they say that it was fortunate that they could express the disappointment as much as they wished. Jo Minjoon

looked at the ramen without any words. Cooking score of 4. He wondered that that much wasn't to the point he couldn't eat it. Because the noodle was certainly edible. Although it had a strong industrial feeling, it wasn't to the point that it was disgusting to eat.

But the moment he ate a char siu meat, he couldn't control his expression anymore. It had a strong fishy feeling. The freshness was only 57%, and he didn't even expect anything for the quality.....But for his mouth that had only eaten good food for a while, it was a really terrible quality.

“What do you have to do at times like this? It's really uncomfortable that she serves this to a customer, speaking as someone with the same job. The problem is.....”

Jo Minjoon glanced at the owner standing at the other side. It was a grandmother that had more age than Rachel. And just like everyone is like this, Jo Minjoon was also weak at the elderly. Rachel said with an astringent voice.

“We can't even communicate, so for what will you even argue? And..... For some, a flavor like this may be something they grief for.”

“I thought that old people would all cook well.....But it seems like this was a preconception of mine in the end.”

“Age shines when you invest time on a work.”

In the first place, this store gave the feeling that it was ramen to earn money however she could rather than a specialty store. It was when Jo Minjoon didn't even touch the char siu and was about to gulp the noodles. The store old lady looked at Jo Minjoon and smiled softly.

“Is it tasty?”

Although she spoke in japanese, Jo Minjoon could understand that much. Jo Minjoon answered in an awkward japanese.

“Yes. It is.”

Although he didn't think like that at all, how was it that he could answer this naturally while smiling. On top of that, the result of his smile was that the lady gave one more lump of noodles to Jo Minjoon.

It was difficult to decline when she was showing that much goodwill. In the end, when Jo Minjoon got out of the store while grabbing his stomach and walking unnaturally, Rachel patted his back with a worried expression.

“You should have stopped eating. Why did you eat it all?”

“She smiled at me as if she was looking at her grandson, I couldn't stop eating.”

“You are gentle at useless parts.”

Rachel smiled as if she couldn't hate him. Martin looked at Jo Minjoon and said.

“You are not full to the point you can't eat anything else, right?”

“.....Honestly speaking, I am. But I will digest some of it while walking.”

“That's why I was saying, the two of you.....How about going to the place you got recommended?”

“The place mr. Yamamoto recommended?”

“Yes. Personally speaking, as a PD, it's quite interesting. A store with a lot of variety of foods to the point you can't decide the theme, and somewhere that was recognized by a master like mr. Yamamoto.....Isn't that amazing?”

“.....Thinking about it, the point that mr. Yamamoto recommended it was kind of amazing. Normally, those kind of stores tend to be lousy.”

He only focused on what food they served when they got the recommendation from mr. Yamamoto. But thinking about it there

was no way that someone like Yamamoto would have a low tasting level. And in the first place his tasting level was at level 8.

‘Is it a special store?’

Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel. Rachel seemed to have read his sight and then nodded.

“Let’s go. It’s not that we are particularly busy, and it’s close anyways so we don’t lose anything by going.”

“.....Well, at least it will be better than that ramen.”

Rachel smiled bitterly. She thought how much more he was suffering as he that that sensitive taste.

Jo Minjoon kept looking at his surroundings for a fine store even while leaving. But of course, he could only check the ones that had windows so he wasn’t certain about everywhere.....at least, he didn’t find anywhere they could enter among the ones he checked.

‘Good stores are hard to find wherever you go.’

There were many places that kept the tradition for a long time, but compared to the culture you could say that their grades were rather low. Thinking about it, food that followed tradition also meant that it was a dish that didn’t progress.

Although there was some meaning on the point that they replicated the flavor of a long time ago, that was just a cultural meaning. Because it was obvious that rather than medieval dishes old dishes were more delicious, and rather than old dishes contemporary dishes were more delicious. Cooking and people’s tastes for food always evolves, so if you don’t match yourself with that flow called culture, it was obvious that it would fall back.

As they went to the restaurant Yamamoto recommended, the number of restaurants seemed to lessen and houses started to appear more frequently. It was to the point that they wondered if this was the right path.

“It seems like this is the place?”

The place Jo Minjoon and Rachel stopped at was in front of a tile roofed house. There were lamps hanging on the eaves, and there was something written in chinese below that. Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“Can you read that?”

“Ah, yes. It’s 식본.”

“식본?”

“The basics for food, root.....It seems like it was written with this meaning. Do you want to go in?”

“Yeah. Let’s.”

They carefully entered. The restaurant wasn’t that wide. And the structure wasn’t that different to Yamamoto’s sushi store. There were some tables in the corner and there was a structure of a bar in front of the kitchen with tables and chairs without backrest. It was when he looked at the kitchen. Jo Minjoon’s feet stopped, and his eyes shook in shock. Rachel turned to look at Jo Minjoon with a weird face.

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah, nothing.”

Jo Minjoon even replied with a pale face, maybe because he was too surprised. His two eyes were looking at the people in the kitchen, the faces.....and also at the system window.

[Higashino Haruki]

Cooking Level : 9

Baking Level : 3

Tasting Level : 9

Decoration Level : 8

Chapter 148: The Hands Of A Master (5)

‘Even if they say that there are many extraordinary people in the world.....’

He couldn’t imagine that he would encounter someone with a cooking level 9 this suddenly. An old man that was in the kitchen approached them slowly. He had a shaved head with mixed black and white hair that made it look gray, and some wrinkles at the side of his mouth that made him look stubborn.

“You a customer?”

It was japanese. The guide approached them and was about to translate those words. And as he saw that they didn’t answer, he seemed to have realized and english got out of his mouth. The pronunciation and accent was so smooth that it couldn’t be comparable to Yamamoto.

“You don’t know japanese. Can you speak english?”

“Ah, yes. You speak english really well.”

“So, who are the customers and who are not?”

Higanoshi’s eyes passed over Jo Minjoon and Rachel and moved to the staff. Jo Minjoon and Rachel couldn’t reply to that question. Martin slightly looked at his surroundings. It wasn’t that wide, but it was enough for all the staff to get accommodated. He opened his mouth.

“We all are customers. Is it okay for the camera to also come in?”

“I don’t care if you just don’t make a fuss.”

Higashino answered with a blunt voice. It was quite a mean attitude taking into account that he was treating a customer, but was it because he saw his cooking level. Jo Minjoon thought that Higashino’s attitude was acceptable.

Jo Minjoon pulled his body to the table bar in front of Higashino.

“You don’t have a menu?”

“No. If you have something you want, just say it. I will make you everything if we have the ingredients.”

“.....Anything?”

Rachel put on a perplexed face. She had visited several high class restaurants in her not short life but this was the first case that they entrusted the menu itself to the customers. It was then. Jo Minjoon slowly opened his mouth.

“Katsudon.”

Katsudon. Tonkatsu and rice. It wasn’t a dish he liked. He didn’t dislike food like Gyūdon or oyakodon, and he liked tonkatsu. But it was hard for him to like katsudon.

And the reason was simple. Katsudon is the hardest among rice bowl dishes with toppings. The reason was simple. You had to bring out the crispiness on the fry while smearing sauce in it. Although it may seem simple with words, actually doing it was difficult with ordinary skills.

To say nothing of a local store. You wouldn’t know about other dishes, but he had never seen a store that cooked katsudon properly. In addition not even in hometown Japan, Jo Minjoon hadn’t been able to see a katsudon above cooking level 6 through the windows....So there was nothing more to speak.

Higashino nodded as if he understood and then looked at Rachel. Rachel put on a perplexed face for a moment. When her hands touching her chin stopped, she opened her mouth.

“Grilled atka mackerel. And also a kochi. With chicken heart, meatball, and a lot of variety above that.”

Higashino also took the order of the orders. Among them, there were people that asked for hamburger or pasta, but he didn’t say no to no one. Jo Minjoon saw that and gulped. He thought he could understand why Yamamoto had it difficult to express the identity

of this store properly.

He took in the orders of more than 10 people and then entered the kitchen and started to cook. There weren't even 10 gas burners, but he didn't hurry. He boiled water and oil, heated the frying pan and sliced the vegetables.

There were no assistants. It was an amazing thing to just let it pass like nothing. Although there were no people when they entered, there may also be a time when the tables were filled. Even right now was like that. Higashino was in charge of more than ten people all alone.

‘On top of that all the menus.....’

Jo Minjoon opened his eyes abruptly and looked at what Higashino did. His job was strange. If you were a normal chef, when orders came flocking in like this, doing three dishes at the same time was a limit. If you had to do more than that, the orders inside your head could only get tangled up.

But Higashino was different. It wasn't that his hands were fast to the point his eyes couldn't see it. But just never stopped. He prepared all the ingredients needed in the orders, and didn't waste time in one place.

“Impossible.....”

Jo Minjoon looked at Higashino as if he was dreaming. If there was a regulation in the kitchen and Rachel Rose and Jo Minjoon were the previous best, Higashino was showing a look worthy of praise as a 1 man worker.

If that kind of person was level 9, then what kind of dimension would someone at level 10 be at?

And after a while, a katsudon was placed in front of Jo Minjoon.

[Katsudon]

Freshness : 97%

Origin : (Hidden, too many ingredients)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 9/10

He understood that the cooking score was 9. Because katsudon was a dish that you had work really hard in its processes, taking into account that it was a rice bowl dish. There was a lot of room to increase the score. But the important thing was the flavor. The spoon got extended slowly in his nervousness.

The katsudon made by Higashino gave a different feeling to the ordinary ones. First, the rice had a brown color as if it was soaked in soy sauce. It just seem like India's nasi goreng, and the flavor was also like that. But it wasn't that it was dry and hard like nasi goreng. The combination of the soft and sticky rice covered by the egg and onions was really nice.

In the case of the tonkatsu, a flavor he didn't expect at all came out. It was crispy. But it wasn't with the meaning of the crispiness of normal tonkatsus. Just like a cookie, but a crispness that wasn't hard and was soft was felt every time he chewed. If it wasn't wet in soup, it would have been felt hard.

‘This flavor.....’

Jo Minjoon opened his eyes wide and put only the tonkatsu in his mouth this time. The flavor he felt every time he chewed the fry wasn't unfamiliar. And at that time, he thought he could know the secret of it. 9 points. Although he couldn't know the recipe, he felt like he could know it just with the flavor. Jo Minjoon looked at Higashino and asked.

“The batter coating.....did you put in water brewed with green onions in it?”

“.....Your tongue is quite sensitive.”

Higashino looked at Jo Minjoon with strange eyes. At that moment, a pleasant feeling ran down his Jo Minjoon's spine.

There were many reasons for it. The flavor of the katsudon in his mouth was one of it, realizing the secret of the batter coat without the help of the system, and the last one thing.

‘To be able to cook like this.....’

He felt like the world had widened. It was then. Rachel looked at Higashino with curious eyes.

“You seem quite familiar.....Do we know each other?”

“No, but I do know you. Rachel Rose. I thought that you had retired.”

At Higashino’s calm voice, Rachel opened her eyes widely as if she was surprised. And then smiled faintly.

“Well, I was a bit famous back then. But the problem is that I think that I also know you.”

“I have worked in the japanese embassy for a bit. Perhaps, you.....”

“The japanese embassy! Certainly. I thought that someone able to bring this flavor shouldn’t have a normal past. Perhaps, I may have walked past you back then.”

“The meat, it will turn bad if it cools.”

“Acting hard.....”

Even if you put on a welcoming smile, as he replied with a blunt attitude, it was hard to add some more words. Rachel put on the grilled fish in her mouth with an unsatisfied face. And then looked around slightly. Jo Minjoon was looking at her grilled mackerel with burning eyes.

“Why, do you want to eat?”

“.....Ah, I can’t. I’m already full..... I think that eating all of the katsudon will be my limit.”

Honestly speaking, he was thinking of going to the toilet to vomit

everything and eat again. But he couldn't do so. Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings. Dishes of various colors. Hamburger, tomato pasta, grilled salted mackerel, tofu in soy sauce and of course the vienna sausage all looked delicious.

It could only be like that. It wasn't that it had splendid sculptures along like Rachel did. Only that the dishes didn't have any flaws. The tofu was smooth and wasn't broken at all, and in the cases of the vienna sausage or grilled fish, etc. it had a simple but delicate and ideal knife marking in it.

But that was just too suitable. It wasn't excessive nor lacked. A decoration that precisely stimulated your desire to eat. Even the shape of the light soy sauce spreading over the codfish dish seemed like a paint that a painter dropped on purpose over the drawing.

"A while ago....so i'm speaking at the semi finals. When I was left with Kaya, ANderson and Chloe.....We spoke about what kind of restaurant we wanted to run."

"And what kind of restaurant did you want to run?"

"One just like this one. A quiet and cozy place. That when customers come and tell me the dish they want, I cook it if it's possible. But honestly speaking, even if this is a wish, it's not a dream."

"And why don't you dream about this?"

"It's not realistic. Of course, this store is amazing.....but honestly speaking I think that it is possible because of the amazing skills mr. Higashino has. And to get that skill, it will take tens of years. I'm really greedy. I want to cook all of the rare and precious ingredients in the world under the most perfect kitchen tools. I don't want to be in a silent countryside kitchen, but a kitchen that's filling with people like a city. Perhaps, that may not be the greed of a chef, and may have to concentrate on handling the ingredients in front of me as well as mr. Higashino....."

Jo Minjoon looked at his fist holding the spoon. His eyes trembled slightly.

“I can’t do anything about my urgent feeling. I want to walk a bit faster, and farther if possible. Is this a bad thought?”

Rachel extended her hand with a regretful face and placed it on Jo Minjoon’s back. Rachel’s hands softly stroke his back. She asked.

“What do you think about me?”

“Yes?”

“That do you think my dream is? As a chef.”

“.....Mm, don’t you want to resurrect Rose Island just like when your husband was alive?”

“Then, am I calm or urgent?”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t reply hurriedly. He was careful about judging her teacher’s emotions as he wished. However, Rachel’s eyes were calmly urging for his answer. In the end he could only open his mouth.

“Are you.....in a hurry?”

“Yeah. Really.”

Rachel replied shortly. SHe also had her age. But of course, being in your sixties nowadays wasn’t being that old, but you didn’t know when an illness would appear. It was a useless worry, but she couldn’t do anything about feeling uneasy. A day faster. She wanted to restore the sight of those days.

“But I don’t dislike this urgency of mine. Because every day that passes, the regret I feel makes me remember the worth tomorrow has. So don’t blame your urgency. Although you may feel that your uneasiness may gulp you down.....It can rather become your food.”

“.....Thank you, teacher. I certainly feel more comfortable after

hearing those words.”

“You are a cool man. And one day, you will also become a cool chef.”

“But teacher.....”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth as if trying to say something but he shut his mouth. He had something he wanted to say. But it was difficult to say it in front of Rachel’s warm expression. Jo Minjoon’s lips closed. And when his mouth opened again, the words that came out weren’t the ones he was going to say.

“My stomach is sending me a sign. I will have to empty my stomach. I will be able to eat more when there is more space.”

“.....Aren’t you overdoing it? You can just rest.”

“No. It’s because these are dishes that make me want to eat it even if I have to do that. I will come back immediately.”

Jo Minjoon left. Rachel just put the fish in her mouth without saying anything. Every time it got chewed with her teeth, a blood flavor came out exploding just like a bomb. Rachel smirked and looked at Higashino.

“It’s a really good dish. Thank you.”

“I think that you have a really funny disciple.”

“Funny.....Yes, he is. You saw that he got the water brewed with green onions right? He’s that sensitive of a kid. No, he’s not only sensitive. He may be able to guess everything that goes on a dish if he tries it.”

If people that didn’t know about it listened to it, they should have gotten surprised, but there was no change in Higashino’s expression. Rachel looked at him with a strange face.

“Aren’t you surprised? You already knew it? Or you can’t believe it?”

“There will be no reason for someone at your level to lie like that

to tease an old man like me. I believe in you. But it's not that I already knew."

"But your reaction is quite calm."

"Because it's not something to get startled at."

At Higashino's blunt answer, Rachel looked at him as if it was somewhat regretful. It wasn't even her ability, but did she find the fun on people getting surprised at Minjoon's ability? Rachel opened her mouth.

"It is not? Someone with a sense that's more outstanding than others ate your dish. Isn't it obvious for you to get curious and ask his opinion?"

"It is a good thing. Having an absolute taste as a customer. But in the end he is also a customer. He's not that special."

"How is he not different? He can evaluate your dish in the most absolute and objective way."

"What does that change then? If that youth says that my dish wasn't delicious, does that mean that I have fed non delicious food to the people that visited my store all those years?"

"Of course that's not it. But he will be able to feel a more precise flavor and on another dimension than other people."

"There's nothing absolute in food. And there's also no low and high in food. If it's someone like you, you should plentifully know it."

Higashino's small eyes moved to Rachel. Although there was certainness in his eyes about what he had said, Rachel had her own certainness. Because she knew someone that lived in a completely different world of cooking. And that was her husband. If Higashino had also seen Daniel by his side.....He wouldn't be able to say the same things.

"No. There are high and lows. At least, that's what I think."

"Just what is it that pushes you to that inferiority complex?"

At the word inferiority complex, Rachel's eyes became sharp. Higashino let out a sigh and shook his head.

"That was too heavy."

".....It's fine. Instead, let me ask you a question. What's the reason you opened up a restaurant like this?"

Higashino didn't answer for a moment and just looked at Rachel. He could not answer if he didn't want to. But he didn't know why he couldn't stay still. Higashino slowly opened his mouth.

"From a day, cooking felt like a homework to me. And I didn't like that. I liked cooking, and if you like cooking you obviously have to play and enjoy with it. That's why I opened up this restaurant."

"I can't do that."

Rachel answered with a blunt voice. The meaning in her eyes were too determined that even Higashino flinched at that moment.

"The homework you didn't solve and left it, I will have to solve it."

Rachel's eyes rolled slowly. And what those eyes saw was Jo Minjoon walking out of the toilet. A warm smile appeared in Rachel's mouth.

"Along with that kid."

Chapter 149: Rival (1)

“.....It was that delicious?”

Anderson frowned as if he couldn't believe it. Jo Minjoon nodded.

“It was almost similar to what we ate on Alan's Olive Island.”

It was an evaluation without exaggeration. Although he couldn't see a 10 points dish until the end, making dishes on that level alone with limited ingredients meant that it was a plenty fine store even while compared to Olive Island.

“For a store run by one person to be similar to Olive Island.....As it is you the one saying it, it shouldn't be an exaggeration.”

“If you come to Japan later on, it would be good if you go there.”

“.....Ah, Sera and I couldn't enjoy it that much. Every sushi restaurants we went to had fishes on bad conditions, and when we entered ramen or udon stores, we saw that most of them used noodles made in factories.”

“Masters aren't people you can see that frequently.”

“I heard by the staff, you only found good places. Can you get a feeling just by watching?”

“Well, it's similar.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. Anderson lied down on his bed and looked at JO Minjoon with weird eyes.

“Do you know that you are quite detestable at times?”

“Me?”

“Yeah. A guy that has all the talent that can be named act as a normal person, and on top of that don't slack off on working hard.”

“You already know that chefs can't do anything with just talent

and without working hard, why are you like this?”

“Did you see someone being jealous logically somewhere in the world?”

At the impertinent voice, Jo Minjoon turned his head and stared at Anderson. Anderson frowned.

“What. Why.”

“You are jealous of me?”

“Why? Am I not a person? Not even letting me be jealous.”

“.....No, it’s just funny. Because I was also jealous of you.”

Anderson frowned as if it made no sense to him. Just who was jealous of who. He had never thought that he would hear the words ‘I’m jealous of you’ from someone that had an absolute sense of taste.

“Are you making fun of me?”

“No, it’s the truth.”

“Why are you jealous of me?”

“You cook well.”

Anderson still looked at Jo Minjoon with confused eyes. Jo Minjoon shook his hands and said.

“But i’m not saying that i’m still jealous of you. On the early stages of Grand Chef.....I was really jealous of you. You grew up from outstanding chef parents and absorbed all of their knowledge..Your basic skills that can only make your talent flourish, and the conviction I can feel in you about cooking when you gave me advice. And most of all.....”

Jo Minjoon smiled playfully.

“You could face against Kaya in the finals. And I couldn’t. I was also jealous of that.”

“.....Crazy bastard.”

“Don’t they say that if you don’t want to end as a normal person, you have to have a crazy part in you?”

“It is important on what are you crazy about.”

“On cooking. WHere else will I be crazy?”

“Only on cooking?”

Anderson’s eyes became sharp. Jo Minjoon turned his head.

“Sleep. We also have an internet broadcast tomorrow at midday, so it would be trouble if we have dark circles below our eyes.”

“If only you get out, I will go to sleep. So don’t mind.”

“Do I turn off the lights?”

“Yeah.”

Click. The lights got turned off. And after 6 hours from that, at 5a.m. The silent alarm started to ring. It was an old jazz music you would hear in old bars.

Anderson slowly lifted his body up in his sleepiness. Although they didn’t broadcast that late, they also didn’t do it this early. But even so, the reason why he woke up this early was simple.

‘I can’t lose today.’

Recently, Jo Minjoon and Anderson started to have some kind of weird competition. Perhaps, it may be better to think that it was a one-sided competition from Anderson..... He didn’t want to show his sleeping side when Jo Minjoon was cooking breakfast alone. To Rachel, to the cameras and to Jo Minjoon.

He may be able to win today. Even if Jo Minjoon was diligent, he wouldn’t be in the kitchen at 5 in the morning. It was when he walked to the kitchen while thinking like that. Anderson’s expression stiffened.

“.....What is it.”

The lights in the kitchen got turned on. There were several

ingredients placed on the cutting board, and a few dishes on the table. Rather than having made breakfast, it looked like they were experiments. When he opened the turned off oven, he saw a still hot mackerel in it.

And Jo Minjoon was asleep while seating on the chair of the table. Did he fall asleep after setting the timer of the oven and waiting. Anderson opened his mouth.

“Hey, wake up.”

Jo Minjoon didn't react. It was the same even if he shook him. Well, looking that the mackerel in the oven was still hot, he may have fallen asleep not a while ago. The exhaustion accumulated during the day wouldn't have been normal, so it wasn't impossible for him to fall asleep.

‘.....Do I have to clean this up.’

Anderson glared down at Jo Minjoon. But if he just left it like this, it was obvious that he would feel bad about this wherever he went. Anderson let out a sigh and threw Jo Minjoon in the sofa. How sleepy was he that he didn't show signs of waking up even after that fuss.

Although he brought a quilt from his bedroom, he didn't want to cover him up himself. And even less if it was in front of the camera. Anderson just threw down the quilt over Jo Minjoon and returned to the kitchen.

“Just what did you make....”

Anderson calmly looked at the table. There were various things. Katsudon, gyudon with rolled eggs. He could also see sushi made with frozen salmon they bought in the market, and in the case of the mackerel that was in the oven, it was cooked in a sauce of unknown identity.

Anderson raised his chopsticks with sloppy movements and then put the mackerel in his mouth. At that moment, Anderson's eyes

loosened up. It was partly because he wasn't fully awake from his sleep, but also because the sweet oil flavor of the mackerel woke him up.

It was delicious. There were few cases that Jo Minjoon's food wasn't delicious, but this was special. Because it revived the Japanese feeling in itself. Perhaps, he may have recreated what he ate today. While thinking like that, he looked at Jo Minjoon sleeping on the sofa.

"What he made in a day, and what was cooling down in the oven is this much.....?"

If Jo Minjoon didn't get asleep, so if he could eat this mackerel in its time....the emotions he would feel by them wouldn't be comparable to now. His heart beat. A faint fear grabbed Anderson's ankle. He could know. That the Jo Minjoon he saw at first was different to the current Jo Minjoon.

The first impression Anderson had about Jo Minjoon was a bastard that made no sense saying that Kaya would win with just one grilled eel. But the more time passed, the more he realized that he wasn't the reckless type but the calm one. And that his resolution towards cooking and his abilities weren't weak at all. However he didn't think that he was amazing. It was still like this even when he got to know that he had an absolute sense of taste.

But the more time passed, Jo Minjoon grew more monstrously. At first, he honestly thought that Jo Minjoon was below him. Be it on comprehension of ingredients, and the minute handicraft. But now, he couldn't do that at all. However he saw him, Jo Minjoon wasn't lacking in anything compared to him. But Anderson thought that he was lacking compared to him.

'Will I.....be able to keep receiving your jealousy?'

He didn't want to get behind anymore than this. He had caught up a lot in a short time. Although Jo Minjoon may not know that accomplishment at all, there was one thing that Anderson wanted.

To get the jealousy from Jo Minjoon, and being jealous of him. This kind of relationship. For this equal relationship to be maintained.

As a rival, as a friend.....

—

Morning. He could feel the sunlight shining through the window. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes thinly and then closed it again. He feel sleepy. And tired. There was no place in his body that hurt. And his fingers were heavy to the point he couldn't lift them.

‘Ah, the oven. I put the mackerel in the oven.’

As he had set the timer, it wouldn't keep running. But the problem was after that. As the day was warm, perhaps it may have turned bad to the point that it wasn't edible. Jo Minjoon raised his body. The quilt that was over his body fell down. He felt that he certainly felt asleep on the chair.

‘Did the snail bride lay me down.....’

Maybe it was because he wasn't fully awake that he was thinking about absurd things. It was when Jo Minjoon went to the kitchen. His face, that was depressed for not having washed the dishes became rigid. There were many dishes prepared on the table. There were things such as scrambled egg, and also fried fish and rice. It felt like a japanese styled table. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“What is all this?”

“What can it be? It's breakfast.”

“Ah, are you also the one that took me to the sofa?”

“.....I have never done that. You went and liad down yourself.”

Anderson paused for a moment and then answered. Jo Minjoon said with a confused voice.

“What is it? I wasn't even drunk but I don't remember that.”

“You would have been drunk in your sleep. Shut up and go and bring the girls. I already made breakfast.”

“Uh, yeah. Okay.”

Jo Minjoon was about to leave when he turned to look at Anderson.

“But what did you do with the things I made?”

“I ate it all.”

“Thank you. For cleaning up. And for laying me down.”

“I told you I have never done that.....!”

At Anderson’s words, Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and went to the girl’s dorm. Rachel, Sera and Emily seemed to have woken quite a while ago that they had clean faces.

Jo Minjoon, that sat down in the table, was putting on quite a bright face in a while. He could only do that. Because when you lived abroad, the hardest thing was eating a meal. ALthough he did eat mango rice in Thailand, etc. it had a strong thailandese feeling. To say nothing of Italy. Because there were more cases that they cooked the rice less and ate it as salad.

The food they ate in Japan was the most similar to a Korean table. Thinking about it, it was an ironic thing. That the meal his mother had prepared was something he couldn’t say was tasty even if it was a joke, but for his heart to get calmer in front of a table that was similar to that.

Rachel smiled brightly and said.

“Whatever happens, you do like white rice.”

“I thought that I wasn’t the type to be obsessed about it, but now I am slowly starting to become like that. When I eat rice I feel like I just had a meal, and however much I eat without rice it just feels like i’m just recharging energy..... I don’t even know what i’m saying.”

“I know what you are saying. Westerners feel something similar to bread. How can their eating habits change in a day to another.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and put the rice in his mouth. A rice that had a violet colour because it was a bit mixed with black rice. It had a stronger aroma than white rice, and the sweet flavor was also deeper. It was to the point that he started to feel nice even when he was eating rice without any side dishes.

‘What kind of recipe will be possible with rice.....’

If it wasn't bokkeumbap(볶음밥) or bibimbap(비빔밥), it was hard to get more than 7 points of estimated cooking score. As rice was something really basic, he couldn't think of making something special with rice. You would accompany it with something special, but there were almost no cases that you cooked the rice in a special way. Emily glanced at Jo Minjoon and said.

“You use the chopsticks really well. To be able to grab a grain of rice.”

“Ah, if you are korean, this thing is a basic. When I was in middle school I went to a competition that was about moving soybeans quickly using your chopsticks.”

“Ahaha, that's a cute competition.”

“You don't know how fierce it is when you enter. It also hurts your hands a lot.”

“It certainly hurts right now.”

Sera raised the ginger pork, that was pork rested in ginger soy sauce. Looking that the tip of the chopsticks was trembling, it seemed like she couldn't put strength in her hand properly. It was childish but Jo Minjoon felt a sense of superiority at that moment. Could he say that he had become an elite in using chopsticks. Jo Minjoon smirked and said.

“Personally, the fork is more difficult for me. Especially for things like salad, I don't know how to eat it with a fork. If you

scoop it up, everything falls down, and if you stick it the things that are below don't even get in your fork."

"Hm. It somehow comforts me saying that using the fork is difficult. But even so, it's not that my ability in using the chopstick becomes good. Ah, I don't know. There are forks here right? I will just have to use one."

"Ah, Sera. Bring me one for me too."

Emily hurriedly turned to look at Sera and said. While Sera was pouting, Jeremy looked closely at the rolled eggs in his chopsticks. The white and yellow layers that were set up like crepes were lovely.

"Anderson. The rolled egg you made is prettier than the one Minjoon makes."

"Thank you."

".....I can't just let those words pass by. Jeremy. My rolled eggs aren't normal either."

"Don't worry. Yours was more delicious. Although I prefer the texture for this one."

Anderson clashed gazes with Jo Minjoon. Jeremy looked at the two of them as if it was interesting. Anderson opened his mouth.

"Shall we go for a round?"

Chapter 150: Rival (2)

“What do I do. I can’t decline those kind of offers.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson with confident eyes. You wouldn’t know if it was a normal day, but today he seemed more confident than ever. The reason was simple. He ate Yamamoto’s egg sushi yesterday. 8 points. That meant that Jo Minjoon had also perfectly grasped that recipe.

If it wasn’t a sushi and only the egg roll, he wouldn’t get 8 points. But it was enough with just that. Anderson’s egg roll was 6 points. 7 points. It was possible. Jo Minjoon believed so.

“Fine. Then, let’s make it at the same time. We have to compete on the same conditions.”

“Right. Let’s do that.”

The smile in Jo Minjoon’s mouth disappeared. He stood in front of the kitchen table with calm eyes. He still didn’t forget Yamamoto’s recipe. No, he had rather organized it. The problem was the ingredients.

‘I do have chestnut oil and pine nut oil. But for the stock..... Among the ingredients that go in the recipe I only have tangleweed, anchovies, and bonito.’

It was hard to materialize half of the flavor of a recipe if you didn’t copy it properly. But even so, he couldn’t go and buy the missing ingredients. It was then.

“Wait. The two of you wait.”

Sera approached with a playful expression. She raised the smartphone and asked.

“It’s good if there are many viewers for competitions like this. It would also be good to use it to promote the live broadcast. How about filming this and uploading on the internet?”

“.....Are you speaking about this?”

“Why. Is it childish?”

“That’s not it.....well, fine. Let’s do it.”

Anderson shrugged his shoulders as if he couldn’t do anything about it. But Jo Minjoon didn’t even pay attention on their conversation. He poured all of his attention on the problem he had. Looking only at the egg roll without the rice, Yamamoto’s egg roll was 7 points. But right at this moment, the egg roll he could make with limited ingredients had a score of 6.

Lack of ingredients for the stock. That stimulated Jo Minjoon. He had to think. And he started to. The meaning of the recipe. The meaning each and every one of the ingredients had.

‘Why did he have to mix those things. Using tangleweed, anchovy, katsuobushi won’t give me the same flavor? Let’s think the flavor of the egg roll I ate back then.....’

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes. Just like the windows of the system that told him the estimated cooking score popped up endlessly, his thoughts also continued endlessly. A problem gave birth to another problem, and an answer also gave birth to another problem. And after a while, Jo Minjoon’s eyes opened up slowly and sharply. He turned to look at Anderson.

“Shall we start?”

“Let’s go.”

The two of them started to boil water to use for the stock and then started to break the eggs. And the methods of the two people changed from there. Jo Minjoon broke the eggs with two hands in a calm atmosphere to the point it looked like he was devoted to it. And it was the same when he beat the eggs. Anderson brought the whipping machine and beat it quickly, but in the case of Jo Minjoon he raised the chopsticks and calmly and slowly beat it as if he was caressing it.

After that, Jo Minjoon started to put the ingredients in the boiling stock. He put anchovies and bonito in a cloth and put it in the water that was boiling tangleweed and then mixed it with the beaten eggs. The seasoning was simple. Yuzu kosho(유즈코쇼). A condiment that received love in Japan, it was done after he put confucian pepper sauce in an adequate quantity. Yamamoto's rolled egg was perfect because of the vinegar and wasabi in the rice. The yuzu kosho was able to fill that empty flavor.

However the yuzu kosho wasn't the only thing added in the beaten eggs. The salted pollack roe, he took out of the fridge, was put on the beaten eggs. This was going to be able to give the stock a spicy and sweet flavor if he put it now.

As the ingredients itself were different, the amount of stock that would go in the rolled egg would also be different. Actually, it was already a completely different dish. If you had to name the things Yamamoto used directly, it would be chestnut oil and pine nut oil.

Compared to Anderson, that put the pen on the gas burner, Jo Minjoon turned on an induction fire at low and heated the frying pan. Yamamoto made the egg roll in a pan that was heated balancedly over straw fire. He said that that made a smooth exterior without disbalances. He thought that the induction fire would be able to catch up to that balance.

‘.....The two are overly serious.’

Sera looked at the two of them and put on an exhausted expression. They weren't playing at some light game. It was to the point that even Sera, that grabbed the camera with a playful feeling, got serious.

In the case of Jo Minjoon, he made a really thin and fine egg roll. And in ANderson's case, he was making a comparatively thick one. You couldn't know which one would be better yet. Only, their hands hitting the pan and rolling the egg were really delicate. Just like that of a master's.

Even if the rolled egg got completed, the dish still hadn't finished. In the case of Jo Minjoon, he grated radish and put it over it, then he poured garlic juice. In the case of Anderson he fried scallions and placed it over. Jeremy saw that and let out a sigh. He had simply spoken just to see their ability to roll eggs, so how extravagantly were they making it.

'They say that if you want to eat something delicious, making chefs compete against each other was the best.'

"Eat this. And also pick which one was most delicious."

"Is there a need to do that. I will win. How much time did I pour on my rolled egg."

Anderson opened his eyes sharply as if he could never lose in rolled eggs. Jo Minjoon smirked and said.

"I'm also confident in it. It's one of the things I made frequently before starting to learn cooking properly."

"Eat mine first."

At Anderson's words, everyone extended their chopsticks. And Jo Minjoon also wasn't an exception. Is it because it was just made or because the recipe was changed a bit. Compared to before, the flavor was slightly different. The layers were still there, but the textures themselves were really thick.

But it didn't mean that it was bad. Every time you chewed, it gave you an abundant feeling, and because of the sweet flavor in overall it also gave you the feeling that you were eating a roll cake in small size. In overall, it was a japanese rolled egg loyal to the basics.

In the other hand, Jo Minjoon's rolled egg was particular. Having salted pollack roe wasn't that special of a combination. Because that combination was quite famous. However, the yuzu kosho with pine nut and chest nut oil was special. Rachel nodded and said.

"You reformed the rolled egg Yamamoto used in his egg sushi."

“Yes. I didn’t have all the ingredients, so I fixed it moderately.”

“It’s difficult to say what’s better and worse....but it’s delicious. Really.”

At Rachel’s words, Jo Minjoon smiled brightly. His rolled egg had a score of 7. Taking into account that it was made in scarce conditions, it was a really good result. Although in the case of Anderson it was a 6, but even so it didn’t mean that Jo Minjoon’s rolled egg was better. Anderson’s rolled egg was loyal to the basics. For people that wanted a simple flavor they would feel Anderson’s rolled egg to be more delicious.

And actually the results also got out like that. Rachel and Emily picked Jo Minjoon, Jeremy and Sera picked Anderson. It was a tie. Jeremy opened his mouth.

“If you get more age, rather than stimulating things you prefer comfortable food like this. It would be different whether it’s the main or a sub, but aside of that I prefer Anderson’s more. As he has good technical skills, he doesn’t act that high. I like that point.”

“Even so, I preferred Jo Minjoon’s more. WHen eating food becomes an adventure, that becomes the funniest time. Yuzu kosho and pollack, that combination was quite fresh.”

“Thank you.”

Sera said while closing up on her smartphone.

“Everyone, this hasn’t been decided yet. If you are curious about the results of the two of them, you must check on today’s live broadcast!”

With Sera’s last words, her short job as a cameraman ended. Jo Minjoon looked at her with strange eyes.

“Competition to continue?”

“Uh.....It felt like he had to have a 2nd part of it, so I ended up speaking like that.”

“Well, what matters. People probably won’t even care.”

That.....

They did.

—

Frank Bond : I didn’t know I would sweat while looking an egg roll competition. Why are they that fierce.

└ Annabel Montgomery : I kind of understand. As he’s my friend, I want to lose even less. I like that kind of rival relationship.

Isla Elias : I think I can know the flavor of Anderson’s rolled egg in an instant. But I can’t even think how Minjoon’s will be. It certainly feels like Anderson is loyal in the basics and Minjoon in creativeness.

└ Peter Downard : As an active chef, I agree with your words. Anderson is more experienced in handling manual dishes, but in the case of Minjoon, he fills that with creativeness and comprehension towards ingredients.

└ Isla Elias : @Peter Downard Ah, you really are a chef? I have something i’m curious about, is it common to have those kind of skills at Minjoon’s or Anderson’s age?

└ Peter Downard : @Isla Elias There is no way. Experience, effort. It’s not easy for those things to accumulate at that age. Especially in Minjoon’s case, is there more to say? He has an absolute sense of taste.

Teagan Holdcroft : But even so, what would they compete in? Cooking? Thinking about the last broadcast, it seems like it may be related to eating.

└ Olive Jerram : Who will beat Minjoon with eating? He’s the best in the world right now.

└ Teagan Holdcroft : @Olive Jerram Uh.... He is the best on

having a sensitive tongue, but will he be it for tasting? He's still young. Even if knowledge on flavors is wide, I think that there will be a limit due to his age.

└ Qamar Putthoff : @Teagan Holdcroft But because of his taste, won't he be able to overcome the limit of age much faster? As the hardware itself is too good, the speed which the software gets downloaded will also be much faster.

└ Deka Khela : @Teagan Holdcroft Well, putting aside his absolute taste, I think that it would be fun if they do this. Who eats more.

It wasn't an explosive reaction, but just after 10 minutes of the video having been uploaded, the viewers were talking about what kind of competition would Jo Minjoon and Anderson have next. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson with an astringent face.

"I think that it's been awhile after Kaya that I have been mixed with someone and become a topic."

".....So why does that person have to be me?"

"What can I do? It's unavoidable as we are together as bff's."

"Don't use words such like that. Not that we are girls."

Anderson flushed. Sera opened her mouth with an awkward face.

"I'm sorry. Because of me....."

"What about it. Now that it turned out like this, we just have to compete. But what do we compete in?"

"I don't know. You think."

".....Guessing ingredients?"

Anderson turned to glare at Jo Minjoon with cold eyes. Jo Minjoon scratched his head with an awkward face. "If you don't want to, propose something." At those words, Anderson fell in his thoughts. After a while, Anderson looked at Martin.

“Where are we going?”

“Yes?”

“Where are we going to go?”

“.....It’s a secret.”

“You have to tell us so we at least think of what to compete in. Can’t you just tell us?”

Martin rolled his eyes with a troubled face. In the end he opened his mouth as if he couldn’t do anything about it.

“We are going to go to a restaurant.”

“.....A restaurant, so you are talking about somewhere we can do fine dining like westerners do, right?”

“Uh.....It’s similar. One certain thing is that whether whoever goes, everyone will get amazed.”

“It’s a three star.”

Jo Minjoon said. Everyone turned to look at Jo Minjoon with a faces that said ‘huh?’ And then turned to look at Martin again. Martin was maintaining a calm expression but Jo Minjoon didn’t miss that Martin clenched his hands even harder. Martin opened his mouth.

“Ey, is a three star that common?”

“It is in Japan. It’s also time for us to go to one. It’s a bit disappointing if we can’t even go to one before the season ends. Thank you. It’s my second three star in my life, I will be able to go thanks to you.”

“No, I told you it’s not a three star.”

“Martin. I have a sensitive taste. I can at least distinguish how lies taste.”

Martin shut his mouth. He couldn’t get swept by Jo Minjoon. However Jo Minjoon was already searching in his smartphone.

Martin licked his tongue several times at the feeling that his lips were drying up. After a while, Jo Minjoon smirked and said.

“There’s one. A three star restaurant that is near here and has a course system.”

“I.....believed that you were my fairy.”

Chapter 151: Global & Local (1)

Martin didn't admit Jo Minjoon's guess. However, it was already a pointless thing. Jo Minjoon and the others were already half certain of it. Martin's dispirited attitude was also one of those reasons. Anderson opened his mouth as if it was obvious.

"Tokyo Harmony.....Just listening to the name gives me a feeling that it's a fusion restaurant. Has someone gone there?"

"I have."

The only one that replied was Emily. Emily, that saw Anderson and Jeremy glancing at Sera, smirked and said.

"You all shouldn't have gone. As I know, it hasn't been a while since this place got Michelin restaurants. It didn't have any stars at all and got all three at once. That was why I went there."

".....Mm, I have heard once. But I just looked pictures because I didn't have the chance to go."

"Pictures....."

Anderson mumbled with a weird voice. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"Should I show you a picture?"

"No. I'm not looking. You shouldn't see a picture of somewhere you go for the first time."

Anderson denied with a blunt voice. Jo Minjoon asked with a confused voice.

"Why?"

"I think I know the answer for that. Can I answer it for you?"

Emily raised her arm and asked like a student in a class. Anderson made a gesture for Emily to do as she pleased. Emily put on a serious expression and said. It felt like she was treating this

like a quiz.

“Because you want to enjoy the first flavor, right?”

“.....The first flavor?”

Jo Minjoon looked at Emily with a weird expression and then at Anderson. Anderson nodded as if those words were right. Emily said with a triumphant face.

“You also know well. Appearances also take a role on deciding the flavor of food. But of course, for normal stores....so I mean for places that sell hamburgers or ramen, you can expect what kind of shape it will have, so it's a bit different. But the cases of these restaurants are different.”

“Well, even the appearances are different. But of course, normal restaurants also work on the plating and decorations....but normally, the more expensive a store is, they even hire a food artist to focus on the looks. But.....”

Jo Minjoon tilted his head as if it was a bit vague.

“Isn't it also fun to spend a long time after looking a picture of a dish? You don't know the flavor, and only the look. You are curious as to how it will taste, and the moment it's served in front of you....I think that the emotions you would feel then would also be good.”

“Well, that differs from people to people. There are people that have those things last a long time, and people that disappear after a short time. It looks like for Anderson, it's short.”

“Hm....Anyways, I heard that japanese people liked to talk while hitting around the bush, but it didn't seem to be the case for restaurant names. Rather, it feels like they want do that to hold the theme of the store.”

Harmony. Combination. It was obvious what those words meant. People would have made contact or found it between japanese dishes and dishes from all around the world. Perhaps, that may be

the strongest point Japan has. Localizing abroad dishes, and the globalizing of Japanese dishes.

‘I think that Korea also has some personality for localized food.’

For example, the thing that was most talked about was pizza and pasta. Several toppings were placed and they put cheese, sweet potato, cream, etc. In the dough.....On top of that there were even cases that they made the dough itself to have the shape of a pie or a coffee bun.

It was the same for pasta. Different from the west, that put sauces that stick to the pasta, in Korea when they raised the pasta with cream sauce, the sauce would fall down.

Thinking about it, it was an amazing thing. It was the same dish, but some people may feel that to be delicious and not for some. And the standard for that ‘something’ was that it could get different depending on the environment.

‘If your tasting standard changes depending on the environment you grew up.....Where will my standard be set at?’

Honestly speaking, he only thought that it was where he wished it to be. Because there was no rule in his mother’s dishes. At times, it was insipid to the point he couldn’t taste anything, and at times it was hard for it to take it close to his mouth.

Perhaps, that hard to eat cooking method was the thing that made Jo Minjoon establish his own tastes. And while thinking like that, Jo Minjoon unconsciously laughed. Rachel opened her eyes roundly and looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Why are you laughing like that?”

“Well, I got that sudden thought. That my mom not being able to cook well rather served as teaching my talent.”

“.....How so?”

“People normally get used to flavors their moms make since

small. But for me to get used to it, the food my mom cooked.....mm.....was a bit weak.”

“.....I think that your mother will get sad when she hears that.”

Rachel said with an awkward face. You wouldn't know if it was the past, but now she was the mother of his disciple. She couldn't cooperate because of Jo Minjoon. And Jo Minjoon smirked as if there was no need to.

“If she was going to get sad at these words she would have studied cooking before. But it's fine anyways. Thanks to that, I obtain my own tastes.”

“Cases like that aren't nonexistent. Normal people become interested in cooking because of two reasons. Their parents cook too well or too poorly. But, why did you think of this so suddenly?”

“Thinking about it, it was kind of a mazing. That depending on your country, the place you grew up, your tastes changed. And I wonder how my tastes were established and on what bases.....Why are you looking at me like that?”

Jo Minjoon paused and then asked towards Rachel. She was looking at him with trembling eyes as if she was really shocked. Rachel shook her head like she was surprised.

“N, no. It's nothing. I just remembered of someone.....That thought, is a good one. Keep thinking like that. You will certainly gain something.”

“Yes. I will.”

At Jo Minjoon's smile, Rachel was smiling back with unnaturally. She could only be like that. Because her heart right now was just like storm.

‘He says the same things.....as Daniel.’

Perhaps it may only be connecting things. It was something anyone could think, and there may be more people that said the

same things to her than she thought. However, was it because it was Jo Minjoon that said those words, she felt the meaning behind it to be deeper.

“Me too.....”

Anderson hesitated but ended up speaking. He glanced at Rachel and Jo Minjoon and then looked down at his fingers acting coldly and said.

“I also got the same thought. Just like the product of Japanese people show up on the name of the store.....Cooking has more ideals behind it than what you can think of. Based on what you think while cooking, the restaurant itself can change.”

“That’s a good thought.”

Rachel smiled softly and looked at Anderson. Was it that he didn’t want to lose to Jo Minjoon. To express his thoughts right before a compliment was said, he felt really childish and mature at the same time. Because he opened his mouth even while knowing that he would get that feeling.

While looking at the three of them, Sera looked at Emily with vague eyes.

“This relationship of rivals, isn’t it really funny and cool?”

“Yeah. It’s always like that. It’s regrettable that epicureans can’t get rivals.”

“.....You think so?”

“It is like that. We just eat and write our opinions, so do you think we are able to get rivals like that?”

Sera’s mouth shut down stiffly. You couldn’t know what she was thinking through those lips. While Emily started to get her doubts, Sera turned her head and opened her mouth. It was a kind of dispirited voice.

“Right. There’s no way there can be something like that.”

Michelin three star. The meaning that had was simple. A place worth traveling to go to that restaurant. It is simple but at the same time really magnanimous.

Although there was a saying that Michelin evaluators were rather lenient with Japan, it didn't mean that the meaning of a 3 star declined.

Tokyo harmony was located on the beach of Tokyo port. It was a 2 story building, but just looking at the height looked like it was a 5 story one. The walls that had a round shape like a dome was made with glass, and because of that you were able to look at the sea while inside of the building.

“Wow.....Certainly, after coming to Tokyo and coming to this restaurant, I think that I may only remember this scenery”

Jo Minjoon got amazed and said. The sea was being reflected in his eyes while taking some fresh air. It was when those eyes of him were looking at the western table, clean marble floor, and the rafters on the roof that Martin opened his mouth.

“We are soon going to start the live broadcast. We have quite a lot of viewers on standby today. 140 thousand. We have 10 thousand more viewers than the last start. You all remember the introductory words right?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Then, before starting the broadcast, say all of the difficult or cheesy words you want to say now. Be it like I love you friend, etc. I will delete it from the scenes.”

“I know you won't.”

At Anderson's blunt voice, Martin scratched his head with an awkward voice. And soon raised his hand. Three fingers. Two fingers. One. The six people smiled towards the camera at the same time.

“Hello. It’s hunger trip.”

It was a clear voice, but it wasn’t noisy. Words started to pour down the screen.

[Oh, the camera opened. But where is this.]

[I heard it was Japan, but it looks really luxurious. Is it a Michelin restaurant?]

[Ah, I think I know where that is. It’s a three star restaurant located in Tokyo. Was it Tokyo Harmony. It was really delicious.]

The six of them just watched the chat window go up. Only after Martin stuck his face next to the window did they get a hold of themselves and turned to look at them. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“This is a restaurant located in Japan called Tokyo Harmony. It’s a place Michelin gave three stars. We are all quite looking forwards to it.”

“We are, but how is it that you are even more so?”

“It’s the first time i’m eating asian food that’s ranked with three stars.”

Actually, just looking at the cooking levels, Higashino’s store didn’t fall down by that much. But of course, there were no 10 point dishes, but the average score was similar to a three star restaurant.

However, cooking wasn’t something you could judge with just the flavor. The surroundings was this open and beautiful, so how could that not influence in the flavor at all. In addition, there may be a lot more expensive ingredients than what Higashino used, so honestly speaking, there was a good possibility that the flavor may be better than Higashino’s restaurant. That was what Jo Minjoon thought. Even if you were an outstanding chef, you couldn’t do anything about the abundant flavor of expensive ingredients.

Soon, one of the chefs approached them. Jo Minjoon just looked at him. His cooking uniform was quite peculiar. It seemed like it was a combination of Japanese yukata and a western uniform. It was black in overall, and had several white bands on it. But there was something more peculiar than that.

[The chef came. But he's white?]

It was just like the comment. Was he about in his forties. The chef that approached them was a white man with sand gold hair.

“Welcome to our restaurant. I am the head chef of Tokyo Harmony, Samuel King.”

It was an english with strong britannic dialect. Emily smiled brightly and opened her mouth.

“It's been a while, Samuel. You are still looking cool.”

“Thank you. You are also beautiful Emily.”

“Uh.....I'm a bit confused. As it was a Japanese restaurant and a fusion one at that, I obviously thought that a japanese person was going to be the head chef.”

“Well, I may be half japanese by now. I have studied cooking in this land for more than 10 years already.”

“Samuel smiled gently and answered. Jo Minjoon looked down at the menu. There were words written in english and japanese in it. Jo Minjoon, that glanced at the whole menu said.

“There's no differentiation with appetizer or main dish?”

It was like he had said. Although it was categorized as salad, noodle, rice, meat, sushi, sea food, etc.....There wasn't an order to it. Samuel replied with a calm voice.

“That was the restaurant I wanted. A restaurant that doesn't fit in the normal dining system. Ordering whatever food you want to eat whenever you want. Are you uncomfortable with it?”

“No, actually.....I'm really comfortable with it. Because there is

no uneasiness about what I should pick.”

Jo Minjoon laughed in a good mood. Samuel turned to look at them and said.

“I won’t be recommending a dish to you. I have done investigations after investigations to the point I could say that each and every dish is perfect. And I also don’t care about the order of it. Only one thing.”

Samuel cutted his words. And at the same time, servers appeared from behind him and placed down a total of three dishes in the center of the table. They were all pickled ginger.

“Every Time you finish a dish, cleanse your mouth with this pickled ginger. That way, whatever flavor you may try, will feel clear regardless of what you ate before.”

“It just seems like a sushi store.”

“I won’t deny that I got inspired by it.”

Samuel smirked and said. Jo Minjoon looked at the menu. Soon, his eyes stopped in one place. Steamed beef dumpling. Next to it, it was written as the origin was Kobe. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“How about ordering a dumpling?”

“Uh.....ah! Steamed dumpling? If it’s a steamed one instead of a fried one, it won’t be that burdensome to eat at first. Fine. I agree.”

“I also agree.”

Like that, their first dish became steamed dumpling. After a while, the steamed dumpling that were on a steamer were placed in the middle of the table. Jo Minjoon gulped that and looked at that.

[Steamed beef dumpling]

Freshness : 98%

Origins : (Hidden, too many ingredients)

Quality : High

Cooking Score: 8/10

“It’s a dumpling we made by making the skin and fermenting it ourselves. I did my best for it not to look like it was lacking to the ones served at dumpling stores. Now. Eat it along with this soy sauce.”

Samuel mixed wasabi with soy sauce suitably himself. Jo Minjoon slowly grabbed a dumpling and stuck it on the soy sauce. And then looked at it with lovely eyes.

The dumpling that had the size of a finger was elaborate and cute. The skin that had a light colour trembled just like jelly, but it didn’t tear that easily, and you could see the ingredients inside faintly. The drop of soy sauce falling down the dumpling was quite lascivious and sexy, just like water flowing down the body of a woman.

That was why he felt some kind of guilt when he ate the dumpling. At first, it stimulated his lips as if it was kissing him, and when the stock inside the skin of the dumpling moistened his throat, his chest became numb as if he was a vampire sucking on the neck of a kid.

The soy sauce also wasn’t a normal one. Maybe it was because it was mixed with lemon juice, that a fresh and sour aroma cleaned his throat. And the juices that came out of the green bean sprout and beef was so moist he almost couldn’t differentiate if he was eating a dumpling or soup.

[Jo Minjoon is certainly the best when eating. He eats really deliciously. Is it because he’s more sensitive?]

[I couldn’t see him because I was appreciating Emily’s, face. How did he eat?]

[It looked like he was kissing a woman. I can’t express more than this.]

To the point even the chat spoke like that, the happiness, guilt, and anxiousness in Jo Minjoon's face was just too clear. But it was when some time passed. His eyes that were closed to savour the flavor trembled a little. The window that popped in front of Jo Minjoon, the thing he was reading touched him.

[The origins of the beef.....It's not Kobe but Matsaka?]

It was certainly written as Kobe on the menu. Of course, beef from Matsaka didn't fall back to Kobe's at all but rather it was claimed to be better. It wasn't that they were playing with the ingredients.

Jo Minjoon looked at Samuel. Samuel faced Jo Minjoon and smiled softly.

“Is there something uncomfortable?”

“No. It's not that.....This.....”

Jo Minjoon smacked his lips. He wondered if he should be asking this. Because there would be no way to remark that if it was of the same quality. But if they had to use beef from Kobe and not from Matsaka, and the beef they were using now was a mistake from the kitchen. If that faint difference in flavor could make a more excellent dumpling....While thinking like that, he couldn't keep his mouth shut anymore.

Because even the breeding of Kobe and Matsaka were different. It wasn't simply a problem of origins, but brand. So the flavor could also be different. At least, it was like that for Jo Minjoon. Matsaka's had more marbling, and the kobe one had a more harmonious marbling. If there was no difference on that, there would be no way people would prefer two different things.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“It was written as the origins was from Kobe on the menu.....But what I feel is softer and has a stronger flavor than the harmonious marbling I know. Is it really.....from Kobe?”

At that moment, silence fell on the table.

Chapter 152: Global & Local (2)

Get the origins right. No, perhaps you had to say that he got the breeding method right. But it wasn't that difficult of a thing to do. Because even if it wasn't Jo Minjoon, there were still a lot of people that could differentiate Kobe and Matsusaka beef after eating it. And if they were people that were really knowledgeable about Japanese beef, they could even guess what breed it was with just looking at it.

However, even if it were them, would they be able to guess it right if it was inside of a dumpling? The flavor would overlap with the other ingredients and you wouldn't even be able to differentiate if the moisture was from the fat of the beef or from the stock.

Samuel opened his mouth.

"That's.....right. We recently changed the beef that goes in the dumplings to Matsuzaka's. I still couldn't fix the menu and was about to explain it to you...But you got that right. Even when inside of a dumpling.It seems like your fame wasn't a lie."

His voice was completely shaking. It wasn't that he didn't know about Jo Minjoon. If you knew how to speak English and entered the culinary world, it was difficult to not know about Jo Minjoon except if you were a retired elder.

However, looking him through a broadcast and actually seeing him with your eyes was a completely different feeling. And even more, if his absolute taste was demonstrated.

[Now, it isn't even surprising.]

[Did he guess things right like this once or twice? He even got the part of bee fright that was inside of a tofu pocket, so how surprising can that be.]

[But isn't Matsuzaka better than Kobe's meat?]

[It is more expensive.]

As soon as Samuel finished consenting, the chat went up. Sera, that was looking at that, let out a sigh and shook her head.

“I can’t get accustomed to it however times I look at it. No, how can you differentiate the marbling of meat? And something that’s inside of a dumpling?”

“The thing is that I ate beef from many provinces yesterday.”

“.....Normally, you can’t differentiate that just with eating it once.”

At Jo Minjoon’s natural answer, Sera replied with a depressed voice. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and looked at Samuel. It wasn’t that he spoke to boast about his absolute taste.

“Is there a reason you use Matsuzaka instead of Kobe beef?”

“It’s because of the difference in flavor you felt just now. How was the dumpling you just ate?”

“Moist.....I just felt like drinking fresh soup with the shape of a dumpling. Ah, is that because of the oil that comes out from the fat?”

“That oil does indeed make it a bit smoother. However, the biggest reason isn’t that. It’s the texture of the meat.”

At Samuel’s words, Jo Minjoon silently ate one more dumpling. You would think what kind of texture would there be on diced meat, but he could feel that the meat was being ground and broken in between his teeth. Jo Minjoon got amazed and said.

“Now that I see..... It just feels like tofu made with beef.”

“That expression is funny. Tofu made with beef.”

While Samuel and Jo Minjoon were conversing, the servers approached them and placed something like sandwiches. It was the same size as what they just ate. Sera asked with a confused face.

“Did we order this? I think we didn’t.”

“It’s an offering we give because precious customers came.It doesn’t sound nice saying that it’s an offering. I will speak honestly. It’s out show off pretending to be an offering. It’s the best product from our store.”

“Earlier you said that they were all similar.”

“People originally change their words whenever they want.”

As he answered that bluntly, they didn’t even want to talk back. Looking that Sera was feigning a laugh, Samuel smiled confidently.

“Actually this product can’t be ordered without making a reservation, so I made a reservation with my name. So this is something that goes on me, Samuel King. It’s my dream to cut the urge to do some diet from the viewers and fill this world with obese people”

“.....Can a perverted dream like that exist?”

[There were always guys with a loose screw on weird places.]

[They say that geniuses and retards are only a paper of distance apart.]

Jeremy didn’t bother on the chat nor the conversation. His attention was solely on the flour..

“Is this nan*? No. If it was, there was no way it would end up like this...”

“It is bun*. It’s not that different to dumpling wrappers.’

(TL: Don’t know what these are nor how to tl.)

Even if he said that it was bun, they only saw it as a piece of flour. Jo Minjoon slowly lifted that up. Samgyeopsal, the shape of thick columns, were placed from between the buns, and on top of that there was a red sauce covering the vegetables. Along the aroma of the vegetables, the aroma of the curry was ideal.

‘It’s japanese curry. The score....9 points.’

He thought that the best selling dish was going to be 10 points, but it wasn’t. But he didn’t feel regret. Because there was no law that said that that a 9 points dish fell behind in flavor compared to a 10 points one. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“How do we eat this?”

“Yes?”

“What’s the best method to eat this the most deliciously? All at once? Or by small bites?”

“It differs depending on preferences. If you want to eat and analyze it, it will be better to take bites. You will be able to eat it many times, but also you will be able to enjoy the faint differences the parts of samgyeopsal has. But if you just want to enjoy the overall flavor, eat it all at once.”

“.....It’s regrettable that there is only one.”

“Haha, that regret will potentiate the flavor. You already know that well. Above all that, i’m having some economical problems.”

“I will eat it well.”

At Samuel’s joke, Jo Minjoon smirked and ate the bun. It’s texture was peculiar. Was it because it wasn’t baked in the oven nor fried and it was steamed flour? The faint texture between bread and rice cake. It just seemed like they took off the rough parts of a pizza dough and only made it with the soft parts.

The first thing he felt was only the flavor of flour. He didn’t even feel the juices when he chewed the samgyeopsal. But at one point, the bun that got dyed by the saliva and the stock stucked to the samgyeopsal just like it’s skin, and among the texture that teared of the bun a peculiar and soft flavor of a long cooked samgyeopsal was felt.

“Mm.....”

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes and let out a nice moan. His satisfied smile pinched his cheeks. Would you feel like this when eating the most delicious sandwich in the world? The flavors of the grated vegetables that were inside the curry also spread in his mouth and the samgyeopsal itself felt lovely because it melted just like stock. Jo Minjoon glared at Samuel with resentful eyes.

“.....To only have one bite of something this delicious. This is goodwill but at the same time not.”

“Huhu, I will take it as a compliment.”

“If you were a woman, Samuel, I would have already confessed to you.”

[He speaks of such things while having Kaya.]

[He was born with it. To throw that gaze to a man..]

[Perhaps, also to Anderson.....No. I thought that for nothing.]

“.....I will get an indigestion. Do it in moderation.”

Jo Minjoon, that was glancing at the chat, frowned and said. [I have already got more than 10 indigestions at your words] Looking at that, he couldn't keep frowning. Honestly speaking, when he saw himself at times, there were words he said that were hard for even him to handle.

‘.....If it was Kaya, what would she have felt when she ate this?’

He got that sudden thought. No, you couldn't say it was sudden. Kaya. Tasting level of 10. She wanted to know how her tongue felt things. He wanted to make those things his. If only he could do that.....

“Minjoon.”

“Uh. Huh?”

“What did you feel after eating this?”

At Anderson's sudden question, Jo Minjoon looked at him with

an absent minded expression. Anderson just touched his ears and continued saying.

“Well, I was just curious. As to how you approached food.”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon got that thought. Perhaps just like Jo Minjoon admired Kaya as a taster, Anderson would also be wanting that from him. Maybe it was an obvious thing. He was always next to him, so you would want to get some interest of the person you admired.....and even has the eyes of the entire world in him. Even if Jo Minjoon said it was Anderson, he thought that he would be aware and try to analyze him. The problem.....

‘My tasting level is the same as yours.’

Maybe, as he became tasting level 8 later than Anderson, his actual level would be lower than Anderson’s. He didn’t want to evaluate it in a sloppy way and turn Anderson’s direction to a weird way. Although he couldn’t say it all, he did think of Anderson as a friend.

“I.....Focused on the texture of the bun. Honestly speaking, steaming the samgyeopsal is no problem at all. The thing is that there would be an adequate reason for steaming the bun. At first I thought that it would be the flavor, but what I felt was that the texture was the most important. That moisture feeling, it sticks softly to the samgyeopsal, just like that coating of fat.....doesn’t’ it just seem like curry sauce hot dog?”

“Um, let’s say so for the texture. But what about the other parts?”

“.....I saw a vague path.”

“Path?”

Jo Minjoon’s eyes lost focus and dimmed. Although his eyes were lowering to Anderson’s chest, obviously there was no way that he was actually looking at it. His eyes were drawing something invisible.

“An encounter of countries, culture. An exchange. Think about it. How much would a culture be inserted in a food for it to be created. The products of the region, cooking method, and the historical situations, etc. It has it all. But then, that meets with things of other countries, mixes up.....”

Jo Minjoon’s cheeks turned red. His tongue came out for a moment, licked his lips and then hid again. And then, he continued speaking. A voice that was like a moan or like a groan came out.

“Isn’t this.....too romantic?”

Just with expressing his thoughts, he felt his chest beat. A new cooking style always made him flustered. It was similar to moving to a new house, to a bigger and prettier house. It was a feeling all chefs felt, but was it because the time he dreamt of that was too long..... This moment that could be trivial for others was too important and beautiful for Jo Minjoon.

But of course, the others wouldn’t know about his situation. At least, it was like that for the people watching the live broadcast.

[Are all geniuses like that? It seems like his head is too different to ours.]

[Isn’t it because he is a genius, or he is the strange one.]

[What is certain is.....that it’s the first time I feel a man spewing nonsense while eating to be sexy.]

Anderson just looked at Jo Minjoon. His emotions behind his trembling brows and lips were just too clear. It was a face that was savoring the emotions he got from this dish and showing it without decorating it.

He also understood the words said in the chat. He did feel that it was strange, but he wanted to follow that. Although he wouldn’t imitate Jo Minjoon making an accident, he hoped to be able to understand what kind of view he had. Anderson slowly opened his

mouth.

“The first day I saw you, I didn’t know you were this special.”

“.....Am I?”

“If you don’t like the word special, shall I just say that you have some loose screws?”

Although he did saying as if he was joking, Anderson’s was looking at Jo Minjoon with passionate eyes. What would have happened if he had said the same things. Would the audience have shown this reaction? Probably not. Of course, some may say that it was a characteristic of a peculiar chef, but most would take it as simple nonsense.

However it wasn’t like that for Jo Minjoon. Even if he said the same words, if it was said by Jo Minjoon they thought that it would have some meaning behind it. Even Anderson was thinking like that right now. Although he didn’t know some things, he was able to feel every vegetables that went in the curry. There would be no way something said by someone like that was going to be taken as nonsense. After a while, Emily opened her mouth.

“So what you said just now, putting it in simple words you are saying that there is some fun on the combination that occurs when local and global food are mixed, right?”

“Yes. I think that these combinations are really good. Perhaps, I may feel more affection towards it because this may become the path I will walk in the future. I think that rather than carving a deep well, combining several things together is more charming to be.”

Jo Minjoon said while smiling composedly. Recently, he felt that the path he had to walk was becoming clearer. What kind of dish did they have to make. What kind of paths there are in the world. Jo Minjoon clenched his fists under that determination. And Anderson was looking at that Jo Minjoon and his determination

was also burning. Sera, that was looking at the two of them, whispered quietly at Jeremy's ear.

“He didn't only seduce Kaya but also Anderson just because he didn't want only one well, right?”

Chapter 153: Global & Local (3)

“That was the creepiest thing I heard in this trip. I imagined it. Please, don’t say those things anymore.”

“If you are a woman, it’s unavoidable to get thoughts like this.”

Sera smirked and answered. Jeremy groaned but he didn’t talk back. It was certainly a good picture. Because the two of them had good looks. He thought that it wasn’t impossible for girls to think like that.

‘.....It’s not the time to be thinking about these things.’

Jeremy cleared his throat and said.

“Actually there aren’t many places nowadays that only focus making food on a single country. Even if they got accustomed to junk food, it’s a clear truth that there are more epicureans than before. And most of them want fun things.”

“Ah, are you saying that normal foods aren’t fun because they have already eaten it and are accustomed to it?”

“You got half right. People have improved a lot nowadays, and try a lot of new things.....but honestly speaking, while trying those new things you end up mixing up things of other countries. On top of that, you have the infinite potential of a culture of another country.....So is there a reason to try to find something new in only one country?”

At Jeremy’s words, Sera nodded as if she agreed. Sera looked at Jo Minjoon and said.

“But anyways, aren’t you putting in too much devotion on expression the flavor even when you are a chef?”

“It’s precisely because I am a chef.”

“.....I’m jealous.”

“About what?”

“That you can do both things. Cooking, and tasting. On top of that, you are good on both things.”

“It has its strong and weak points. From now on, your life will continue being like this. You are going to be able to roam the world, feel the care of the people of that town and the restaurant, and also be able to try new and charming food like today's. It's a life I can't have.”

“Are you consoling me?”

“It clearly is not meant to tease you.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and smiled brightly.

The next thing they ordered was sushi. Samuel said with a voice with strength.

“I tried my best to make sushi more delicious than that of a sushi restaurant.”

“.....Is that possible? I recently got this thought while going to some sushi stores, but the flavor clearly got different depending on how you gripped the rice, the shape, how precise you were on slicing the fish, etc. Do you perhaps have a sushi master here?”

“No, there are none. And that's because I pondered all the more. How will I be able to make an excellent sushi without an experienced veteran. I also thought about giving up sushi on my menu, but I didn't want to give up on..... sushi when I handled fusion food in Japan.”

“Then how.....Ah, is it.....”

The doubt in Jo Minjoon's eyes washed off in an instant. He opened his mouth as if he got the answer.

“You decided to win with your recipe.”

“.....How did you know?”

“I also thought the same. If I were to make sushi, how will I bring out the best quality. The reason was only one. Good ingredients,

and a perfect recipe. It wasn't only for sushi, but also on other things. To complement my lacking hand skills, I will have to at least roll my head harder."

His voice was weird. It was kind of bitter, but there was some refreshing tone at the end. Samuel smiled brightly and asked.

"So did you complement it?"

"I have to keep trying. But complementing was also kind of fun."

There was a sincere smile on Jo Minjoon's mouth. He liked cooking. And saying that he loved him wouldn't be an exaggeration either. That was the reason he decided to walk in this path. Now the wall and the mountain in front of his eyes....He was able to take that in happily even when it made him feel stuffed and regret.

[.....I'm jealous. There's nothing better than living off doing what you like.]

[It would be fun when he even has talent on what he likes to do. His life itself would be fun.]

[But the more I see, there's something I find weird. I think that Minjoon thinks of himself as lacking a lot. Do I have to see it as something good because he is humble or that he's stupid? Looking at how he speaks it seems like he is full of confidence.]

[He would say those words because his objective is so high that he's not satisfied with his current self. I rather like that greedy side of Jo Minjoon.]

Words about him poured on the chat, but Jo Minjoon didn't react. It was embarrassing to answer something to those words, and he didn't want to show that he was glad nor sad at the words of others.

The dish came out. There were three kinds of sushi. One was a chicken norimaki covered in a kale leaf, the other was a square shaped sushi box that was a mixture of several kinds of fishes, and

the last one was a sea eel with a crispy skin.

‘.....9 points.’

And that wasn’t even one. The sea eel sushi was 8 points, so excluding that one the remaining two were 9 points. On top of that, the composition score wasn’t normal. 10 points. It meant that the combination of the three was perfect.

‘Just how good is it.....’

Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts for a moment. He was thinking about eating the eel sushi first or the other two first. But fortunately, Jo Minjoon’s pondering wasn’t long. Samuel opened his mouth.

“There’s an order on eating this sushi. First, eat this norimaki.”

At Samuel’s words, Jo Minjoon carefully lifted the norimaki. The rice grains that were covered in kale were holding each other just like glutinous rice. Although there was chicken meat and a side of okra showing off, at first glance it seemed just like an unripe red pepper.

[Ah, I want to eat it.]

[Why am I watching this when my fridge is empty.]

When he brought it close to his nose and smelled it, he could sense the smell of sweet soy sauce that was emanated from the okra, the chicken and the kale leaf. It seemed just like teriyaki sauce. It was when Jo Minjoon put the norimaki in his mouth with expectation.

“Hee.....”

A reflexive moan came out. ALthough some in the chat said that it was a hollywood action, but that wasn’t it. It was the power of it being a 9 points dish that controlled people. THe texture of the okra that was felt beyond the kale was remarkable. The skin that seemed to be between the peas and the bell pepper ripped, and the

corn seeds that were inside of it made him feel like he was drinking a carbonated drink.

Taking into account that the rice grains were stucked together like glutinous rice, it's exterior was just too soft. And in the middle of that, the soft and round texture of the chicken leg meat was added so.....It was to the point that you wouldn't have anything else to ask for.

And the teriyaki sauce also wasn't a normal one either. Because it had a faint aroma in it. Jo Minjoon got amazed and said.

“You put nutmeg in the teriyaki sauce?”

“You really got it right.”

Samuel looked at him as if expected from an absolute taste. Jo Minjoon said with an uncomfortable face.

“ANyone can get this much right.”

“.....I also got it right.”

Anderson slightly opened his mouth and then flushed at the gathering sights.

“What, can't I get it right?”

“Well, it was unexpected. I thought that you weren't the type to participate in these things.”

“Hmph.”

Anderson turned his head. Samuel looked at Jo Minjoon. There was expectation on his face as to what impression would come out. Absolute taste. He could only be curious as to how his food would be felt to someone that has the most sensitive tongue.

However he didn't ask. At least for no, he wanted to be considerate to Jo Minjoon. Samuel pressed down his desires and said.

“When the flavor seems to disappear, eat the eel sushi. Ah, and

you can't eat ginger in between. Because this is no different than a single dish."

Jo Minjoon raised the eel sushi as if he couldn't understand well. Looking that the external skin was swelled up, it didn't seem as if they had just fried the eel. Did the slightly smear flour or starch? The strange point was that the eel wasn't the last, but the middle. Fried food, and on top of that when it was eel, it could only influence strongly without caring what dish came after that. He thought that it would be more suitable for the eel to come out last.

However, everything would have a reason. If not, it was impossible to have a composition score of 10. Jo Minjoon ate the eel sushi while in half in doubt.

There seemed to be some kind of sauce below the eel, although he couldn't see it, but the moment he bit it he thought he could know what it was even without the help of the system. A texture that was as soft as cream, the aroma of ginger and garlic that catches the fishy smell, and a sweet flavor that makes you think of fruits. It was pure. One made by mixing fruit, ginger, and garlic.

'The ingredients.....'

Jo Minjoon started to guess without looking at the system. Was it because he had trained like this quite a few times? The precision in which his tongue felt the flavors was different.

That was particularity his environment gave him. Consciousness and hard work to have a tongue that meets the expectation of the world. Not even the many epicureans focused on guessing the ingredients right like this. And even if they did, they couldn't be certain as to what was actually in it. Because considerable chefs didn't tell you all of the ingredients that entered their dish.

However Jo Minjoon could know the ingredients even if the chef told him or not. When other epicureans solved the problem but weren't sure as to it being right or wrong, Jo Minjoon had the perfect answer sheet called the 'system'. The difference was clear.

And right now.

‘.....Sudachi, honey, pear.....no. This is faintly different to the fresh flavor. What could there be that is similar. Ah, right. Watermelon. It is watermelon. And.....’

After Jo Minjoon thought of all the ingredients, he looked at the system. And then smiled. He got it all right. Anderson, that was looking him at the side, frowned and said.

“What are you mumbling? Ingredients?”

“.....Ah, did I mumble?”

“You were really immersed huh.””

At Anderson’s words, Jo Minjoon smiled awkwardly. Was it because of the freshness of the pure. Not feeling any fishy smell of the eel and getting it all right. He was proud of himself. It was then. Jo Minjoon read a comment on the chat.

[Did you see just now. As Jo Minjoon smells, Anderson sees that and follows him, and also chews the same time Jo Minjoon chews. He was really aware of him.]

‘.....Is he really that aware of me?’

He did understand that a bit, but also felt a bit of regret. Because there was quite a big gap on Jo Minjoon’s real skills and the talent that was exposed. Maybe he was working harder because of that Anderson. Just like Anderson wanted to become a suitable rival of Jo Minjoon, Jo Minjoon also didn’t want Anderson to take him as a mistake anymore.

Was it because he felt like that? Jo Minjoon’s expression that was about to eat the last sushi was more serious than ever. But there was also the point that his expectation was bigger because that past two dishes served like a preparation. Just how ideal would the finishing touch be.....

There were three kinds of fishes piled up on the sushi box. When

he smelled it, he smelled a complicated aroma. It did seem like soy sauce, but there was no way he could know what else was put in it.

The flavor was rare. Aside of being delicious or not, he could only get perplexed at the unfamiliar flavor. First, it was clear as to what the fishes were. Back of a salmon, tuna belly, and the external meat of a rockfish. The simple flavor of the salmon, the oily flavor of the tuna and the chewy flavor of the rockfish combined just like one fish. But what was special.....

“The flavors are different.....”

Jo Minjoon mumbled with an absent voice. It was just like he had said. Maybe they had fermented the fishes beforehand, that the flavor of the soy sauce in the fishes were faintly different. Some were salty, some sweet, and some were sour.

He couldn't see the recipe. It was obvious because it was a 9 points dish. Originally, he would have just given up. But it was different today. Was it because of the complimenting words towards his sense of taste? Or because of the clean and simple rivalry he had with Anderson. And if none of the two were it, because of Rachel's and Samuel's, etc. warm eyes?

Jo Minjoon analyzed. Worked hard to do so. He focused on all the information reaching the tip of his tongue. He didn't care what his eyes saw or his ears heard. And then, opened his mouth.

“The tuna.....you rested it in wasabi soy sauce. Maybe it was because of the oil that you added some juices.....and also pear. The rockfish is the one that gets chewed the longest. Maybe it's because of that that you rested it in vinegar soy sauce that has some pomegranate aroma and made it so the aroma lasted until the end. For the salmon, you rested it in a brewed soy sauce that's a bit watery. Am I right?”

Samuel smiled brightly.

“That's correct.”

“Real.....ly?”

“Why are you like this so suddenly? You got it all right until now.”

Jo Minjoon just showed a trembling smile instead of replying. It wasn't amazing. Normal and simple. However he got it right. He had read the field that the system didn't allow him to. With his tongue.

One step. It was merely one step...

But he had certainly made it.

Chapter 154: Global & Local (4)

But of course, it wasn't that a change occurred because of this step. His tasting level was still 8 and what people thought about this was still 'the absolute taste is incredible'. And actually, the words that came up on the chat were all like that.

It was then. Jeremy looked down at his dish with warm eyes.

"It is delicious but....I think that this restaurant is going to be more popular to tourists rather than japanese people. Am I right?"

"Mm....I can't exactly deny that. They did say that they kind of compromised, so I couldn't completely catch their tastes. But of course, it's not that we don't have japanese customers.....At least half of the half are japanese."

Not even a quarter of the customers in a japanese fusion restaurant are japanese. Even if it is a global michelin three star, it was quite a strange proportion. Jo Minjoon slowly thought back at the sushis he ate just now.

'.....It was delicious indeed, but it felt like sushi that had a mask on.'

He thought that it may not suit the tastes of the feelings of the japanese. Rachel opened her mouth.

"Bringing the two of them is originally a difficult task. A foreign country.....Precisely speaking, it's fine as westerners like it, right? The ones a chef has to treat are the customers inside the restaurant, thinking over the likings of the people that don't even come is a stupid thing to do."

".....Ugh, I think I know what you are talking about. But even so, I still think of that. Is this fusion food that was masked as japanese or japanese food masked as fusion. Well, that may depend on each person."

At Jeremy's words, Rachel turned to look at Anderson and Jo

Minjoon. She threw a question with the eyes of a teacher.

“What do you think about this?”

“What do you want us to say exactly?”

“The proportion of local and global food, what’s the most important thing in that balance. Can you tell me your opinions?”

[It’s a homework.]

[I always found those kinds of questions the hardest to solve. I feel like it may not do it if I answered it half heartedly.]

Jo Minjoon and Anderson turned to look at each other for a moment. And the one that spoke first was Anderson.

“It’s the ingredients.”

“Why do you think like that?”

“Because it’s the ingredients that show the characteristic of a country the best. With that meaning, I can’t understand Jeremy’s words that well. If it’s the sushis we just ate, I think that it’s a dish with plenty of japanese feeling.”

“Right. Then, Minjoon?”

“For me.....the condiments, and spices. Whatever ingredient you may use, if you use a sauce of that country, then the color of that country shows up. Actually most of the people that live in the western Europe think that if there’s raw fish and soy sauce, it’s always a japanese dish. And if there’s cheese in it that it’s an European dish. So in the end I think that the sauce is the most important thing.”

Jo Minjoon thought. If he wanted to globalize korean food, so if he wanted to localize it in another country.....what would be the sauce that has the most commonalities?

Although it wasn’t yet, if you followed the future he came from, in a short time gochujang(고추장) would gain great popularity in west Europe. Although kimchi wasn’t at the level of gochujang, it

was still demanded. Although not all of them liked unripe kimchi because of its fishy smell, it was good to use it as an ingredient to give a sweet flavor.

‘It’s the spicier side.’

There would be nothing wrong to have the prejudice that Koreans liked Korean food more. But of course, most of them really did like it. It was when he thought what would happen if he could handle all of the spices and condiments in the world. Anderson grabbed Jo Minjoon’s shoulders and shook it. Jo Minjoon got surprised and turned to look back at him.

“Wh, what? What happened?”

“No, teacher Rachel was calling you since before. Why are you this absent minded? What did you think of?”

“.....Ah, as you started to talk about global and local food, my head was filled with thoughts.”

It seemed like he couldn’t even hear what Rachel was telling him as he was concentrated on his thoughts. Rachel smiled softly and said.

“Both of your thoughts have some truth in it. This is a dilemma all the chefs running a fusion restaurant can’t help but have. And all of their answers are different. Whether it can become a right or not, it may depend on how long they walked their own path.”

“So what is your path teacher?”

“Looks.”

“.....Yes?”

At the unexpected answer, Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel with a confused face. And that was the same with Anderson and the others. Only Jeremy was sipping some sake as if it wasn’t surprising.

For a chef to say looks rather than something related to flavor. It

was exactly those eyes. Rachel shrugged her shoulders as if she knew they would react like this.

“One of the prejudices people have is that if chefs focus on the looks, they take it as if they are doing something completely different.”

“It’s not a prejudice.....but isn’t that true? In the end, cooking is flavor. Because it doesn’t matter what goes in your mouth.”

Sera asked as if she couldn’t understand well. Although she was an epicurean, she was also a girl. And just like a lot of girls were like, they got amazed the prettier a dish was. But they were certain that it had nothing to do with the flavor. And actually for three stars, the looks were luxurious for nothing but when you put it in your mouth, there were many cases where you frowned.

However Rachel shook her head. Her two eyes were filled with clear confidence.

“It would be like that if it wasn’t delicious. But when a flawless dish was decorated beautifully to the point you would get amazed by it.....Then the story changes. Chefs stimulate the hearts of the customers through their tongues, and that stimulation moves their heart. But if they all look different.....You will be able to make them feel the food when they have already had their hearts moved. The difference that makes is bigger than you think.”

“.....But what does that have with the problem of local and global?”

“Being able to imagine the flavor just with its looks is that you are able to guess beforehand what color of which country it will have. Even if you serve the same sandwich, if you say that it’s a panini people will feel Italy inside the stretching cheese. Although you have to win a dish through the flavor, what you think of before eating also becomes a big factor.”

Jo Minjoon thought like he could understand Rachel’s words and

also with what mind she achieved decorations level 10. Jo Minjoon thought.

‘Then I.....What do I have to end it with?’

Is it certainly the recipe? Although he knew that he felt the most confident in recipe composition, not being able to put your heart into it would also be because of his greed. He also wanted to have a decoration like Rachel’s, and Kaya’s sensitive senses. But he didn’t have much time. Because when the tasting trip ended and he started to work below Rachel.....He wouldn’t even have the time to ponder.

It was then. Sera burst out of laughter. Rachel looked at Sera with an unexpected face. Sera pointed at the chat with a face that became red because of holding back the laughter.

“Rachel, they say that speeches bore them. People think that you are like a school principal.”

“.....Yes?”

Rachel turned to look at the chat with round eyes and as soon as she read a few lines, she instantly became depressed. Anderson said towards Rachel with a soft voice.

“I didn’t dislike the speeches of my previous principal that much. That all becomes blood and skin.”

“Stop your flatteries. I’m not so old as to get deceived by those words.”

Rachel answered with a depressed voice.

They continued the meal. Grilled halibut that was placed in a consomme soup with vegetables, grilled duck that had a wholegrain mustard and wasabi slightly smeared in it, dakkochi, etc. Dishes that were the most luxuriously japanese were placed on the table.

Although all of it was delicious, Jo Minjoon felt a bit of regret. He

looked at the menu again. Most were 9 points or 8. He thought that if it was a three star, it would at least have a 10 points dish.....but there were none.

‘There was also a 10 points dish in Alan’s restaurant, that isn’t a three star yet.....’

Although most of that was enough because of the pasta, it was still 10 points. He thought if there may really be a three star without any 10 points dish.

But he also couldn’t order everything in the menu. In the end, Jo Minjoon looked at Samuel anxiously. Samuel, that was putting on a bitter face at the good reviews mixed with a bit of bad ones, flinched at those eyes.

“.....Do you have something to tell me?”

“Um.....Don’t you really have a menu that you think that we must eat?”

“Didn’t I tell you before. Each and every dish was made with the utmost effort.Is the flavor lacking?”

“No, it’s not that. Only....”

Jo Minjoon paused speaking. It was when he was about to say ‘I think that there was no dish that gave me a strong shock.’. He remembered the words Rachel had just said.

‘Although you have to win a dish through the flavor, what you think of before eating also becomes a big factor.’

He felt like the mist in his head was clearing up. Jo Minjoon looked at his plate. There was fried udon with crab meat and masala on top of the small plate.

The score was 9. It was a nice score. Before, he was amazed with just eating an 8 points dish, no, a 6 points one. However, was it because he just ate a lot of delicious things. His standards were elevated. No.

‘My standards.....were already set up.’

The people and the camera didn't say a thing and looked at Jo Minjoon that was deep in his thoughts. It looked like he was thinking alone again. Although Jo Minjoon wasn't aware himself, getting immersed in your own was seen as fastidious. Just like the culprit couldn't understand, he was just like a person that was on a special and outstanding world. But at that moment, ironically enough, Jo Minjoon was blaming his stupidity.

He had thought. Always. That he wouldn't get caught in the system. When he revealed the absolute taste while borrowing the strength of the system, he was determined to use the system as a tool, not to become dependent of it.

But, he was. Precisely speaking he was overcredulous. The cooking score could vary depending on the time, effort, recipe and technique.....Even when he knew that even when he had composed a recipe which could bring the best flavor, he could get a higher score. Even though he knew that simple dishes had low scores but could be more delicious than high scored dishes.

Even so, Jo Minjoon was obsessed with the score. Even when he discovered himself being like that he got surprised and said ‘this isn't right’..... After that moment passed, he was being obsessed once again at the score.

It wasn't that you had to ignore the score. You couldn't get pulled in by it. Why did you get disappointed at the fact that there was no 10 points dishes. You couldn't be like that.

Jo Minjoon raised his chopsticks again and slowly placed the fried udon on his tongue. The unique aroma of the masala melted down like ice cream, and the crunchy crab meat broke from between his teeth and at the same time soft because of his saliva. And beyond that, the udon that was hidden just like a turtle in its shell appeared.

It was a flavor he couldn't feel until just now. Being impatient

waiting for a 10 points dish to come out, and the prejudice that a 9 points dish wasn't perfect. When those things disappeared..... Even when it was the same dish, it was clearly felt differently.

‘Right. This.....This was tasting.’

Jo Minjoon's face brightened up.

[You have understood a basic of tasting!]

[Due to your broadened knowledge, the first condition to achieve tasting level 9 has been accomplished!]

Chapter 155: The Destined Match (1)

‘The first condition.....?’

Jo Minjoon looked at that sentence with a confused expression. It was a notification he hadn’t seen until now. Did it mean that level 9 was different? Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon who had fallen in his thoughts again with eyes that said ‘he’s like this again.’ For them who couldn’t see the system’s window, it was only seen as Jo Minjoon just looking into empty space.

“Hey, get a hold of yourself.”

“I am.”

“You sound just like someone that just woke up.”

“.....I did wake up. From a dream.”

It was a long and deep dream. While looking at the relief in Jo Minjoon’s face, Anderson put on a weird face. Did he grow in that short while? Although he thought that there was no way it would be that easy, if they were talking about Jo Minjoon, then common sense didn’t work in the first place.

‘.....Whether he did or not, I still have to chase him.’

He believed that the distance wouldn’t widen that much just because of one thing he had realized. And also, Jo Minjoon wasn’t the only one that was growing. When Anderson was organizing his thoughts like that, Jo Minjoon looked at Samuel and smiled.

“I’m sorry for spewing nonsense Samuel. As it was too delicious, it seems like I expected for something more while I got more satisfied.”

“Thank you for speaking like that.”

Samuel smiled while taking a breath. Although he pretended not to be, he was actually really nervous right now. It hadn’t been that long since he received his third star. Although Sera and Anderson

were still newbies, Emily and Jeremy were recognized epicureans, and Rachel was one of the best chefs in the world. In addition, as Jo Minjoon was claimed to have the most perfect tongue in the world, Samuel could only be on his guard at each and every word they said.

‘I thought that I wouldn’t fear anything after gaining my third star.’

Maybe it was because of that, that he felt really thankful at Jo Minjoon’s words. Samuel put on a smile that was filled with good will and whispered silently at Jo Minjoon’s words.

“Actually, what bothered me the most was your opinion. I’m really glad I was able to hear the standard evaluation of an absolute taste. I will be able to be brave forever.”

At Samuel’s words, Jo Minjoon put on a complicated face. Having an absolute taste not only brought you honor. You pulled these many expectations, and at the same time each and every word he said held a big weight.

That’s why for Jo Minjoon, he could only strain himself harder. Whether he liked it or not, the words he was going to say right now wasn’t going to come from a normal beginner chef. It had a weight that not even epicureans who had a long career nor chefs could catch up to.

“Samuel’s restaurant is excellent. Local and global. Let’s talk about the hard things later. The thing I can say with certainty right now is that it is delicious. And I would be more happy if.....I was together with the person I love.”

“Ah, are you talking about that person?”

“.....Sorry?”

[Right in the spot.]

[You are doing well Samuel!]

[But who's that person? I don't know at all. *Lol*]

‘.....Just why do they go so crazy over other people's lives?’

He did hear that America respected other people's private lives. He thought like this for just a moment when he remembered that America was the shrine for paparazzis. And if you think about it, not everyone watching this broadcast was American. You could watch this broadcast from anywhere if you could speak English.

“I will order this. Foie gras steak with apples and onions.”

He had ordered it to change the subject, but Samuel didn't ask anymore. It was when the food they ordered came out. A prostrated smile appeared in Jo Minjoon's mouth.

[Foie gras steak with apples and onions]

Freshness : 93%

Origins : (Hidden, too many ingredients)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 10/10

‘.....After getting rid of my obsession towards 10 points dishes, something like this comes out.’

Well, perhaps it was kind of obvious. Even if Japanese cuisine was simple, if you went with fusion food, the cooking methods of many countries would be added. There was a high probability for the score to increase the more processes it went through, and it would be normal to think that there would at least be one dish like that.

‘Thinking about it, does the score get higher the longer the name is?’

Jo Minjoon looked at the dish. There was beef with a bright sauce at the lowest part. The onions were placed on top of that, and above it was the foie gras with sliced and grilled apples on the very top as decoration.

“.....That looks delicious.”

“Do you want some?”

“Can I?”

“I don’t dislike sharing. Although it doesn’t look cool, we aren’t eating to look cool in the first place. Most of all.”

Jo Minjoon pointed at his belly and said.

“I’m slowly getting full.”

“We did eat quite a lot.”

Anderson smirked and passed him his dish. Jo Minjoon served him the steak and foie gras himself.

[I would like it if he served me too.]

[Foie gras wasn’t all that delicious. I can’t get accustomed to that greasy feeling.]

[You originally have to eat unfamiliar food a lot to get accustomed to it. And even more if the flavor is strong.]

“I also used to dislike foie gras.”

“What?”

“Ah, nothing. I was talking to the chat. Anyways, The flavor and aroma of the foie gras is violent. Because that oily flavor feels like it rises up to your nose and even your brain. But don’t think about resisting that violence, and just entrust your body to it. In my case, this helped me a lot. But of course, it’s still not a dish I can say I like.”

[Do I have to say that that expression is poetic or that he’s just a weird guy.]

[Originally, good poems can’t come out from an ordinary mind. So he’s both of those.]

“.....What about my expression.”

“Sometimes it’s fine, but sometimes it’s annoying. Like I wonder what this guy is talking about.”

Jo Minjoon became depressed at Anderson’s words. Thinking about it, when he was teaching in high school, his students used to say “Teacher, you seem quite the grown up compared to your age.”.

‘.....Was that not a compliment?’

At the truth he realized just now, he became all the more depressed and ate a bite of the beef.

‘The flavor....it’s not abundant?’

It wasn’t to the point he couldn’t eat it, but it was too ordinary. It was then. Samuel opened his mouth hurriedly.

“You have to slice the foie gras in a moderate size, and eat it along with the onion and the beef. Only then will you be able to feel the true flavor.”

“Ah, yes.”

Jo Minjoon sliced some foie gras and onions and stuck it with his fork, and then stuck at the beef. And as it became folded like that, it gave the feeling of being samgyeopsal (TL: translated as three folds). You could say that it felt like the fat that the beef didn’t have was complimented by the foie gras. Jo Minjoon put the fork in his mouth.

A reaction came out immediately. It was unavoidable. Because foie gras was a monster like ingredient that had juices overflowing from it like a bomb every time you chewed. Compared to the beef, it wasn’t even half the size, but the flavor was overwhelming.

“Ah.....!”

A moan flowed out. Although you couldn’t hear the same thing from Anderson, it seemed like he had been equally moved. The flavor was completely different than eating the beef alone. It had

the feeling of being a samgyeopsal made of cow meat.

The abundant oily flavor of the foie gras still roamed in his mouth until the last moment, and the beef that was wet with that oil emanated more flavor than usual. His mouth didn't even feel greasy because the hot sauce that was smeared on the beef and the unique sweet flavor of the grilled onions cleansed that greasiness away.

10 points. This time, he ate it without being obsessed about that. But maybe that was the reason he could concentrate on the flavor more purely. A requisite of tasting level 9. That requisite wasn't there for nothing.

'The food and the tongue. As there was a sloppy prejudice between that.....'

He felt regret. If he went to the restaurant they went to yesterday where he felt regret for not having any 10 points dishes again.....He felt like he would be able to feel another flavor than now.

"This.... is a really fine combination."

"Oh, really?"

"The combination is good, the sauce is good, and the point it was cooked to is just fine. I wonder if it has everything it should as a dish."

"Your reaction is good. Was it the most delicious among the things you ate today?"

At that moment, Jo Minjoon hesitated. Perhaps, if it was the Jo Minjoon before getting this enlightenment, he may have said yes. But that wasn't his true answer. The nature of food was on enjoying it. And the dish he enjoyed the most.....

"No. I liked the three kinds of sushis most."

"Oh, really? That's unexpected. Actually, there were many epicureans that ate that, that said that it had lost the true colors of

sushi.”

“True colors.....”

Jo Minjoon laughed calmly. At that moment, Samuel looked at his face absentmindedly. He was still young, so why was it. Was it because of the sloppy illusion one normally had towards Asians? His face just looked like that of a really knowledgeable Asian man.

“Leaves fall and people grow up and get old, so is there a reason for colors to not change?”

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The meal continued for quite a while even after that. Although they were a bit full, as they conversed with the viewers and progressed with the program while eating, their eating speed was slow and they had plenty of time to digest. The first one to speak among them was Sera.

“So, what do we do about that?”

“What’s that?”

“You know, what I ended up saying. Anderson’s and Minjoon’s match.”

[Oh right, they said they would be doing it.]

[Just what will the theme be? If it’s related to eating, Anderson is in a real disadvantage]

[You don’t know. Eating a lot. Or eating weird things. If it’s stinky tofu, will Jo Minjoon be able to eat it? How much of a shock would that be for that sensitive tongue?]

[I think that he would like it more because of that.....]

The viewers were speaking as if their match was an obvious thing. Jo Minjoon and Anderson looked at each other without saying anything.

“.....What do we do?”

“I don’t know.”

[What? It seems like they didn’t even decide on what to do.]

“I’m sorry everyone. That just now was only a formal comment. You were more eager for it than we thought.....What should we do?”

“Well. A match is not hard at all. But the problem is on what to go with.....”

Jo Minjoon crossed his arms and starting to think. It was then that Samuel opened his mouth.

“You both are chefs. So how about going with a cooking match?”

“.....Cooking?”

“I.....can’t lend you my kitchen, but I can bring you some simple cooking tools. And as we are in a room, it won’t bother the other customers.”

“If it’s fine with you, we are also good with it. But the problem is still what to do.....”

[What’s there to think about? If you want to do it simple, is there something simpler than sushi? It will even be hard to bring fire.]

[Right. Sushi. Let’s go with sushi.]

[Ah, I don’t like sushi. It’s fishy. Can’t they do something like ramen?]

[I wanted to see a Korean style chowder.]

The chat was filled with several dishes. And it was obvious to say, but the most overwhelming one seemed to be sushi. Jo Minjoon and Anderson looked at each other. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I think that we should go with sushi. What do you think?”

“I wonder. Will you be able to beat me? I make sushi really well.”

“Ha, how confident. But even so, I’m not the Jo Minjoon that lost to you anymore. Wait for it, Andokusamu.”

Anderson's face contorted.

“Just what is that name now. An.....Anduku? It's even hard to pronounce.”

Jo Minjoon smirked.

“It's the Japanese for Anduksam.”

Chapter 156: The Destined Match (2)

Anderson frowned. He was giving him a weird name once again.

‘But he gave Kaya a nice one.’

He felt Jo Minjoon’s bright face to be unkind. Anderson shut his mouth and then loosened his fingers. Sushi. Although he spoke confidently, honestly speaking, he wasn’t accustomed to making it. Generally, for westerners, sushi was more like fast food rather than a luxurious dish. It was like a Japanese hamburger.

There was no way he would invest time to make fast food well. Even if he did make it at times because he was bored, that was all. And he thought that his skills would be no different than Jo Minjoon’s.

“But isn’t it more fun if there’s something at stake?”

The one to say that was Emily. Jo Minjoon spoke while washing his hands thoroughly with a wet towel.

“It’s one of the two. Bet some kind of penalty, or a prize. Personally, I prefer the latter. Do you have something to give us?”

“I don’t.”

Emily spoke like that and turned to look at Martin. Martin shrugged his shoulders.

“Even if you look at a poor PD like that, nothing will come out.”

“.....You got your answer. Let’s decide on the penalty.”

Jo Minjoon and Anderson exchanged nervous glances. Although they did act confident, neither of them had any particular experience making sushi. So not knowing who was going to win was also not knowing who was going to get the penalty. Jo Minjoon slightly opened his mouth.

“But do we need that? Even if we don’t.....”

“No. We have. Look how the viewers are reacting.”

[Let’s shave your head. And don’t try to get out of this..]

[That’s going too far. How about starving for a day? Thinking about it, after eating like that, I don’t think they will even want to eat anymore.]

[It would be good if Kaya was there instead of Minjoon. A match while having Minjoon at stake!Sorry.]

They were more interested at the penalty than they thought. No, thinking about it, it was obvious. They say that the funniest thing to watch in the world was fire and a fight, so if there was a penalty, wouldn’t it satisfy both of those things?

Anderson looked at Emily with resentful eyes. Emily put on a faint smile and said.

“Since the conversation has come to this point, then there’s only one answer. Just win.”

“.....What are you going to do about the penalty?”

“Oh, you are giving me the right to choose?”

Emily smiled with a meaning behind it. When uneasiness came to Anderson, Sera whispered in Emily’s ear. And then, the smile in Emily’s face became even denser. Jo Minjoon forced himself to act calm and opened his mouth.

“Do you have something?”

“I don’t know if I have to call it a penalty or a prize. This idea is from Sera, I don’t know if you will like it.”

“Don’t hit around the bush and speak, please. What is it?”

“A relationship of master and servant.”

“.....I’m going crazy.”

Anderson’s face stiffened. But honestly speaking, it was fairly good to be a prize and a penalty. Anderson glared at Jo Minjoon

with chilly eyes. Just what was this that they were going to such lengths. However, his expression was quite serious.

“Let’s do that.”

“.....Really?”

“Why? Do you have a problem with that?”

“No. That’s not it.....well, okay. Let’s do it. I’m going to win anyways.”

Anderson just smirked instead of answering.

Soon, the staff started to bring the tools Samuel gave them. There wasn’t anything special about the tools. Rice cooker, cutting board, knives, steel sheet, a whetstone. Other than that, there were only ingredients for the sushi. Jo Minjoon checked the blade of the knife and opened his mouth.

“Looking at the ingredients, it seems like you want us to win with only the basics.”

“Rather than that, I only had this much to bring. Do well. I’m also curious as to how your dishes will turn out.”

At Samuel’s answer, Jo Minjoon slowly checked at the ingredients. It seemed like they had to make the wasabi themselves, because it wasn’t grated and it had its root intact.

Jo Minjoon raised the wasabi and then started to stir it on the steel sheet clockwise. Having to stir wasabi in only one direction to bring a sweet flavor was something even people without much interest in sushi knew.

After grating the wasabi, it was now time to pick the fish. There were exactly two kinds of fish. Salmon and tuna. Both of them were the belly that had a lot of marbling.

“.....It’s quite a luxurious part for a newbie to handle. I’m sorry tuna, salmon.”

For the rice, it was already seasoned. In the end it seemed like

what would differentiate the flavor in the sushi was on how they gripped the rice, their knife skills, and how suitably they smeared the wasabi and soy sauce in it.

He couldn't even get help from the estimated cooking score from the system. What could be differentiated to be a recipe here would be the amount of wasabi and the amount of rice, but that wasn't something that could be applied immediately even if you knew the recipe.

"Let's ask one thing before we start."

"What is it?"

"The rules. Do we have to place the first thing we make?"

Emily could not answer right away. In the first place, this competition that wasn't really a competition was not something she had proposed. Emily looked around at the others. Rachel opened her mouth.

"Of course you cannot present something that is not perfect to the customers. Continue making it until you feel like it is perfect."

"Yes, I understand."

"However."

Rachel continued on. Anderson and Jo Minjoon looked at Rachel's lips with a sharp gaze. Rachel slowly spoke.

"Chefs must also never waste ingredients. Since you will have made it with your own hands, whether the results are good or bad, make sure that the food you make will not end up in the trash can."

She was beating around the bush, but in the end, she was telling them to eat it themselves. Jo Minjoon and Anderson nodded their heads.

The cooking started. Jo Minjoon first sliced the tuna belly into thin slices. The first cut was a failure. Rather than uniform

thickness, one side was thick and the other side was thin. Of course, due to the section that was cut, even if he cut the next slice perfectly, the shape would be odd. Those failed pieces all ended up in Jo Minjoon's mouth. He did not even dip them in soy sauce. There was no way he could use such luxury after ruining the ingredient.

Jo Minjoon sliced ten more times before grabbing the rice. Anderson was working at a similar pace. Of course, if you wanted to make sushi to simply eat, they would have had more than enough rice already made. However, both of them would not be satisfied with just that. After all, this was a competition. Furthermore, this was a competition between two people who accepted each other as their rival.

Shaping the rice was no easy task. It was difficult to match the correct amount of rice, and they had to make sure they did not squeeze it too tight and ruin the rice ball. On the other side, they also had to make sure it was not too light, because then the rice would not clump together properly and fall apart easily.

Of course, both of them had great hand techniques. To overcome that level of skill was not that hard. However, the experience of eating sushi at Yamamoto's house was still fresh in Jo Minjoon's mind. It was obvious that he could not replicate Yamamoto's skill, as Yamamoto had been developing his skills his entire life. However, this couldn't change the fact that Minjoon was not satisfied with his sushi. That was the same for Anderson.

Apply the appropriate amount of wasabi, meticulously squeeze the rice balls to the right consistency, and apply just the right amount of soy sauce. Why was such a simple task taking such a long time? Sera asked Emily in a slightly tired voice.

".....The two of them, aren't they being too serious about this?"

"They're chefs. They must be like that because their pride is on the line. Plus, you said it yourself last time; the two of them are

rivals.”

“But still...”

Sera had a strange sensation. Like things were not going the way they were supposed to be going.

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[..]

[...ZZZZZ]

[Ah, I went for a walk. Is it over?]

[It's over. Your walk that is.]

[Crazy. Hasn't it already been over two hours?]

[To be specific, it has been about 1 hour and 40 minutes.]

Sera mindlessly stared at the chat window. 1 hour 40 minutes. 100 minutes. Yes, 100 minutes. It has been 100 minutes. It had been so long that over half of the food they had eaten could have been digested already. However, they still had not been able to taste Anderson and Jo Minjoon's sushi.

“Just what... what kind of sushi are they trying so hard to make?”

Sera opened her mouth as if she could not understand. In the first place, she could not understand how they could stand it. 100 minutes. They had been making sushi for 100 minutes. Furthermore, all the sushi they had made during this time went into the two of their stomachs. It was not like their stomachs were empty. They had been full after eating many dishes.

[Looks like Jeremy is sleeping.]

[He is old after all. As for Rachel...well, since it is her disciples, she must be happy just watching them put in so much effort.]

[For me, rather than happy...it feels a bit exciting. I feel like I'm watching an artist burning up their artistic soul. Of course, if I had

went into that kind of sushi shop and had to wait for hours, I would have just flipped some tables over and left.]

The weird thing was that she could understand what they were saying in the chat window. Sera put her hand over her chest. The heartbeat she could feel past her skin and clothes was not normal. It felt like her whole body was heating up and the source of that heat, was definitely the two chefs cooking.

You could say it was because it was a competition, but the basic thing pushing the two of them was passion and love towards cooking. The fact that they could focus on one thing like that, the fact that they could devote their heart and soul into it was cool and made her envious.

“Emily. Can a person be so focused on one thing like that?”

“You’re looking at proof of it with your own eyes.”

“Even though I am seeing it, I can’t believe it. Even me...I hope that someone could look at me and feel the same way.”

Emily looked at Jo Minjoon and Anderson without speaking. They had already emptied two rice cookers. The customers in the hall and already left as the restaurant had closed for a break, and Samuel, as well as his chefs, all stood amongst the staff watching the competition with interest.

It was at that time. Anderson and Jo Minjoon seemed to be exchanging glances, and almost at the same time, they both presented their plates.

“It is ready.”

Did none of the sushi after that have no mistakes? Salmon sushi, tuna sushi, they put one of each on a plate before presenting it.

Truthfully speaking, the taste was definitely lacking compared to the sushi from other specialty stores. However, it was not by much. To start, the quality of fish was good, and the rice mixed with vinegar had already been prepared by the restaurant.

Thinking about how both Anderson and Jo Minjoon did not have much experience with sushi, the fact that they prepared this level of sushi was already a magnificent feat. Jo Minjoon spoke with an apologetic expression.

“I’m sorry. I know it’s important to present delicious food, but also very important to make sure the customer does not have to wait.”

“Don’t worry about it. It was not that kind of competition in the first place.”

[At, it’s over. It’s too much though. Of course I’m sure all chefs live like that, but to seek perfection when making something like sushi.....]

[It’s funny if you think about it. Sushi is basically Japan’s version of a sandwich. It’s like if you restack your sandwich because the angle of the ingredients is off. Of course it is a bit different, but still.]

[So who is the winner? I’ve been waiting for hours just to know who won.]

Both of them put in a lot of effort, but the winner had to be determined. The four of them carefully shared their thoughts with one another. There was one difference between Anderson’s sushi and Jo Minjoon’s sushi. The thickness of the fish, the amount of wasabi, those were pretty similar. If there was a difference, it would be that Jo Minjoon pushed down in the middle of the rice to create a small layer of air, while Anderson did not do something like that.

The discussion was not long. Rachel soon opened her mouth.

“Before announcing the winner, I will start by saying that both of you did a great job. I’m sure everyone watching the broadcast today felt it. They all saw just how serious you are about cooking.”

Jo Minjoon and Anderson did not respond and just looked at

Rachel's lips with heavy eyes. Rachel's lips opened.

"Truthfully speaking, the two of your sushis were pretty similar. However, the results were unanimous. Anderson!"

"Yes."

"Congratulations. You won."

A bright smile formed on Anderson's lips. It was an expression of pure joy like a child would make, which was not like Anderson at all. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly as he lowered his head. He thought he might win this time, but he ended up losing again. He opened his mouth. Losing was losing, but he needed to know the reason why.

"In what aspect was my sushi lacking in comparison?"

"You made a small groove in the middle of your rice."

"Yes. Did that become a problem?"

"It probably tasted good if you ate it right away like you did. However....."

Rachel extended her finger. The finger that was pointing at the cutting board slowly moved to her plate.

"The taste changes when it gets all the way here. Sushi is that type of food. If this was a bar style table and we ate it as soon as you made it, it would have been a bit different. However, to make enough sushi for all 4 people, pass it around, and the amount of time we took to eat it, during that time, the fish slowly sank into the hole. Then the weight was pushed onto the already thinned layer or rice.

Rachel used both her index fingers and thumbs to make circles and push them together before slowly moving them apart. Jo Minjoon finally felt like he could understand. The rice ball that was clumped together would have easily split into two. Just that was enough to create a difference in the tasting experience.

“A chef cannot just learn to cook on top of a cutting board. The true battle happens at the table, on the customer’s plate and in their mouth. Still, I think it was a good experience for both of you.”

“.....Yes, thank you.”

Jo Minsoon answered in a disappointed voice. He thought that he could win. He tried to change it up and ended up being swallowed by the change. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson. Anderson leaned back in the chair and crossed his legs. He looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Hey.”

“What.”

Anderson lifted an empty cup, laughed and put it down.

“Water.”

Chapter 157: The Reason They Are Hungry

(1)

The live broadcast was over. The last message in the chat window was [I'm hungry]. The meal, and the competition was over. It was when the staff and producers were all about to leave the room. Samuel spoke to Rachel with a serious look on his face.

“Rachel. If it's okay can we speak in private?”

“I'm okay but.....”

Rachel turned to look at Martin. Martin nodded his head yes, as if to say it was okay. Samuel started to speak with a slightly brighter expression on his face.

“I will not take much of your time. Please come this way. I will escort you there.”

Samuel took Rachel to the empty room next door. Rachel casually walked and sat down on a chair. Samuel sat down next to her but remained silent. Was it difficult to even speak about it? Samuel's clasped hands were shaking and his tongue just continued to wet his lips. In the end, Rachel was the first to speak.

“If you continue being silent like this, saying you won't take much of my time will end up a lie, no?”

“I'm sorry. I'm not sure how I should start.....”

“I will help you. First of all, what is it you want to say? Is it a question? A request? If it's not even that, is there something you need to let me know?”

“.....If I really had to classify it, it would be a question. At the same time, a request as well. My restaurant..... how was it?”

“You looked extremely serious so I was wondering what it was, but you asked that already during the broadcast, didn't you?”

“I was curious as to what your answer would be when there were no cameras around.”

Samuel’s eyes were serious. Rachel looked at him like she couldn’t understand.

“Samuel. You are the head chef of a three star restaurant. Why does a chef, who is at the pinnacle that the rest of the chefs in the world wish for, care so much about something like my response?”

“.....Not all head chefs of three star restaurants are the same. If you were just an average chef, I would not be asking this question. I would not want to show you my weak side. However, you are Rachel Rose. Together with Daniel Rose, you are every Western cuisine chef’s legend and idol. Even I have at least one foot in the same puddle as those Western cuisine chefs.”

Rachel’s gaze shook at the name of Daniel. Rachel let out a sigh before speaking.

“It would be better if I had not heard what you just said. All it means is that what I have to say will impact you greatly. This was the first time I visited your restaurant, and I did not try all the items you serve here.”

“I know. And I have enough abilities to know which advice to heed and which ones to let go. So you do not need to worry about me.”

Rachel still did not look like she was okay with it, however, she could not just avoid Samuel’s earnestness. Finally, she opened her mouth.

“What Jeremy pointed out earlier, that would be the concern. Whether to cater to the locals or the foreign tourists. I’m sure you’ve worried quite a bit about that decision.”

“Yes, that is definitely the case. I thought that if I meticulously harmonized the two, I could catch both crowds, but that was not the case. The harmonization of the two ended up not bringing

together all of the positives, but rather, ended up just being poorly stuck together. I was happy when I received my third star, but I have no excuse for the opinions of the epicureans who visit.”

“What kind of opinions did they have?”

“That it is ambiguous. It comes off like something amazing, but it is neither Japanese nor Western, and just a mutt. They even said something like that.”

Rachel let out a small sigh. Samuel’s voice started to become more passionate. An anger not necessarily directed at anybody was shaking in the middle of his voice.

“Someone even said that the head chef did not have any thoughts and was not putting in any effort. Even though I was definitely putting in all I had! I’ve even been losing sleep everyday, contemplating on how to make an even better dish. Whenever I heard something like that, I wanted to just throw everything away and just relax., but..... seeing even the slightest smile on the face of my customersit made me realize that I really was someone who could not leave the kitchen.”

“All chefs in the world are like that. We feel the most alive when we are in the kitchen. Samuel, I know how you feel. It must be painful. However, especially in those times, steady the pillar that you have built up in your mind.”

“My teacher was my pillar. Before he passed away.That’s why now, I want to use your opinion as a support to hold up the pillar that my teacher helped me to build.”

Hearing Samuel’s serious voice, Rachel could not answer simply. If the head chef of a three star restaurant would ask her like this, it meant that his mind was seriously wavering. It was not easy to say something so important to steady that wavering mind.

“I...”

That was why when Rachel opened her mouth, what came out

was not words but her mind.

“Just because I am a legend does not mean that I don’t waver. You said that your pillar started to shake after losing your teacher. I was the same way. My husband was my pillar.”

“.....What happened to your husband was a terrible tragedy.”

“Yes, it was a tragedy. I thought that I would not be able to handle that tragedy. And truthfully, I could not handle it. That’s why I have been withering like an old lady for the last ten years.”

“However, you’ve overcome it.”

“Overcome.....”

Rachel slowly started to think about that word. Did she really overcome it? No, she had yet to overcome it. Afterall, she had yet to achieve anything. Overcome was a word she could only say after reclaiming all of her past glory.

However, she did not say such low-confidence words. She did not want to show how far she had fallen, and most importantly, she did not feel like such words would help Samuel. Rachel slowly reached out and put her hand on Samuel’s shoulder, on top of the scar of this little boy who had turned old with the years.

“There is no ocean that does not have any storms. However, without the storms, ships cannot sail. Sometimes, just like me, you can take shelter on a nearby island and continue to rest without ever going back but if we do not forget our goal, we must return to the ocean and set sail again.”

“What do I have to do.....what needs to be done to make sure the ship doesn’t sink?”

“The reason a ship sinks is simple. It either meets a natural disaster, or strikes a reef. But both of those can be avoided to a degree if you set the right course. And based on which island is your destination, that course will of course change as well.”

“.....You’re talking about what you mentioned earlier. Rachel, you set your course on the outer appearance.”

“Yes. To be specific, I set course to create food that makes you happy even before you eat it.”

“That’s difficult for me. I tried to find the meeting point of different world cuisines and Japanese cuisine to show their fusion, but the concern that focusing on that fusion may not have been the right choice, that doubt continues to torment me.”

When he received his third star, he was happy that his philosophy and his cooking was being recognized. However, that was short lived. Rather, the third star made customers’ expectations significant shoot up and meeting those expectations was harder than he imagined.

“Sometimes, I am envious. The Japanese elders who focused on just one type of cuisine and arrived at the plateau.....no, rather, not just in Japan but the grand chefs throughout the world. I’m sure all of them have their own worries, but I doubt they would doubt their cooking philosophy.”

“It’s a useless doubt.”

Rachel firmly stated like there was no reason to think it over, as if she was answering an obvious question. Samuel looked at Rachel with a slightly surprised expression. Rachel responded with a voice full of confidence.

“The path you have chosen is definitely new. As the pioneer, I’m sure the path will be difficult. I will focus on one aspect of what you just said. Just because you focus on one type of cuisine for a long time does not make you a master. A master is someone who is able to perfectly express the taste they want to show on their plate. No matter what path you are walking down, when you get to the end, I’m sure you will be that way as well.”

Samuel could not say anything in response. The only thing that

was coming out of his mouth was a sound of admiration that almost sounded like a moan.

“It will rain. The waves will crash. Your sail will get wet and your rudder may break. However, that cannot change the path you must take. The storm also can’t engulf the island at the end of your journey. Let your ship float.”

Rachel smiled. Samuel could not respond and could only stare at her face, as he was overwhelmed by her words. Rachel opened her mouth again. This time, she was not talking to Samuel but to herself.

“I will let my own ship float.”

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“This.....is the end.”

Night time. Drying his wet hair with a towel, Jo Minsoon muttered in a sad voice. Anderson peeked towards Jo Minsoon and started to speak.

“Why. Are you disappointed?”

“Why wouldn’t I be disappointed? Once we officially start working as chefs, we won’t have time to travel around. It would not be wrong to say that this may be our last travel experience.”

“You never know. If you become a star chef, you’ll be called to these types of programs often.”

“I have to protect the kitchen. Most of the time.”

“Allen and Joseph had no problem filming broadcasts. Doing broadcasts like this rather helps the restaurant’s sales. Of course, if you want to make a lot of money, it would be better to run a hamburger joint than a fine dining restaurant.”

Jo Minsoon smiled bitterly at Anderson’s response. What he said was not completely wrong. In reality, there were many fancy restaurants that ended up in the red because of the burden of

paying for the ingredients. The ones that frequently saw black numbers were only the best restaurants that were always full of reservations.

Jo Minjoon asked.

“Is there somewhere you wanted to go, but have not been able to go?”

“Korea.”

Anderson answered shortly. Jo Minjoon asked again with a surprised look.

“Korea? You never told me you liked Korean food. What is it you want to eat?”

“Rather than wanting to eat something.....I’m curious about the country you grew up in. (TL: The bromance is strong in this one)

Truthfully, Japanese and Vietnamese food are everywhere even in America. Korean restaurants are starting to rise these days, but still, there still aren’t that many. That’s why I want to try real Korean food at least once.”

“.....I started to think about this after hearing what you said, and even though it is my home country, I don’t think I truly know Korean food.”

Living just in the Seoul area all of his life, the only time he got to try to local cuisines of the provinces were when he went on field trips as a student.

‘This, may end up being a problem.’

No matter what you say, Jo Minjoon’s cooking basics were in Korea. Without understanding the food of the country he was born and grew up in, it was like trying to learn English without even knowing how to properly speak Korean. Of course the circumstances were a bit different, but still.”

“Do you know American cuisine pretty well?”

“First, bring some water. No, let’s go with tea. Black tea. Make sure it’s warm.”

“.....He’s really ordering me around quite a bit.”

“Even though Jo Minjoon was pouting, he still went and brought the black tea.” Looking at the quickly boiling water, one question came to mind.

‘.....Just how long does this penalty last?’

Walking back with the black tea with some fear on his mind, Anderson arrogantly lifted up his tea cup. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth as he started to pour the tea into the cup.

“How long does this penalty last?”

“No durations were stated. That means forever.”

“.....I won’t do that.”

“Do whatever you want.”

Anderson agreed too easily. As Jo Minjoon looked at him in disbelief, Anderson answered in a casual manner.

“There are many people in the world who easily throw away what they said. It is a bit disappointing that you are that type of person.”

“.....Fine. I’ll do it. Let’s do it. However, you need to set a duration. A humane one.”

“Let’s be honest. You knew there was no duration. Did you not say anything about it thinking you were going to win?”

It was an unexpected and unfounded speculation. However, it sounded so reasonable that even Jo Minjoon, who was on the receiving end was almost convinced. The moment Jo Minjoon was about to quickly refute what Anderson said, a bell started to ring. It was Jo Minjoon’s smartphone.

“We’ll talk after I pick up this call.”

“Who is it?”

Even though he asked, his expression was one that said it was obvious who was calling. Even though wanted to say Anderson was wrong, he couldn't. It was as Anderson expected. Jo Minjoon let out a cough to fix his voice and put his smartphone to his ear.

“Kaya?”

[Can you talk?]

“Yes. We are currently resting. Over there?”

[It just became morning. I'm in Seattle.]

“Is your schedule based in the US from here on?”

[To be specific, California. I think I'll be in LA for quite a bit. Being the head chef of the new Grand Chef Restaurant there... well, being the mascot pretending to be the head chef.]

Jo Minjoon silently looked back into his memory. After winning Grand Chef, for one year, one of the roles they had was acting as the Head Chef of a Grand Chef restaurant. So that was nothing new. But was that region in LA?

“I think Rachel's restaurant is in LA as well. Specifically in Venice, within Santa Monica.”

[The restaurant I'm going to is bigger than that.]

“Rather than how big or fancy it is, is it close? No, it should be fine. If it is in LA, unless it is at the furthest point, it should not be that far. Maybe we will be able to see each other pretty often.”

[I don't know.....I hope we can, but these people treat me too harshly.]

Her voice was full of silliness. Seeing the smile on Jo Minjoon's face, Anderson opened his mouth with an uncomfortable expression.

“Are you going to make me lose my appetite?”

“You’re not going to eat anyways.”

[Hmm? I’m going to eat breakfast?]

“No, I’m talking about Anderson. He said he’s losing his appetite.”

[Hmph, that pig needs to starve a little. Maybe then, he’ll come to his senses.]

Jo Minjoon silently looked at Anderson’s body. No matter how he looked at it, it was too buff to be called a pig. Maybe a muscle pig. Anderson opened his mouth.

“What did Kaya say?”

“For you to lose some weight?”

“.....I command you as your master. Right now, tell Kaya that you think she is the one who has gained quite a bit of weight and really needs to go on a diet.”

“What?”

“And then hang up right away. If you do that, I will end this penalty right here, right now.”

He wasn’t going to agree to it, but Anderson’s offer was quite tempting. Jo Minjoon’s eyes shook from hesitation...and that hesitation eventually led Jo Minjoon’s lips to move.

“Kaya. Listen without being angry. Uh.....you can’t be angry, okay?”

[What.]

“If we’re being honest, I wonder if you don’t need to go on a diet yourself.”

[You son of a]

Jo Minjoon quickly hung up the phone before Kaya could even finish her sentence. Maybe, on the other end of this hung up call, all sorts of swear words may be flowing out. Anderson laid down

on the bed with a satisfied look on his face as he muttered to himself.

“The taste of power.”

Chapter 158: The Reason They Are Hungry

(2)

As soon as the call ended, he thought he might get an angry text, or even an angry call from Kaya.....but his smartphone was silent for a long time. He even tried to call her himself, but all he got was a busy tone on the other end.

‘.....This is scarier than her being angry.’

Maybe she is extremely angry, or perhaps, maybe she was actually hurt by what he said. There was nothing he could do since there was no response whether he called or sent a text.

“Hey, what should I do? Kaya might not be okay.”

“If her mental strength is not even strong enough to handle something small like this, then, well, she should just give up living in society.”

“.....You cold-hearted bastard.”

“If I really was cold-hearted, I would not have let you out of your slave contract after just one day.”

Jo Minjoon could only sigh in silence after listening to Anderson. Why did Anderson have to drag him into this mess? Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon’s back before asking.

“Are you going to make breakfast again today?”

“I’m not sure. If you think about our flight time, it doesn’t look like we would stop for breakfast anywhere; it might be better to just make it on our own. But we should probably ask everybody else as well. Since it is our last one, they might want to eat at a restaurant than making it on our own.”

“.....Wouldn’t it take too long to go to a restaurant? We might only have enough time to grab a bento or something from a convenience store.”

“Then let’s just sleep in. Since we don’t have enough time.”

“I suppose.”

However, seven hours later, at 5:00am, Jo Minjoon and Anderson were standing face to face in the kitchen. Anderson, who had just come through the door, had a ‘I knew this would happen’ expression on his face before speaking.

“Didn’t you say let’s sleep in?”

“Yes.....but I could not fall asleep.”

“I heard your alarm going off earlier. Even if you try to look like you’re so sleepy you might die, do you think I would believe you?”

At Anderson’s deduction, Jo Minjoon awkwardly looked around. Anderson let out a laugh. Even though he lied, it was hard to be angry at him.

“You idiot. Whatever. Let’s just make breakfast.”

“Is there something you’d like to cook?”

“Seeing as how you’re asking, sounds like you have something you want to cook.”

“Yes. There were many things I felt at Tokyo Harmony yesterday. First.....”

Jo Minjoon opened the refrigerator. There were quite a few different items in there, but maybe because they made breakfast yesterday, there were quite a few ingredients that were lacking. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson and asked.

“Let’s go shopping.”

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Even though it was already summer, at dawn, before the sun had even started to come out, the wind and the ground were both cold. Jo Minjoon pulled the zipper on his cardigan all the way up and put his hand in his pockets. He shook his body trying to warm up.

“Ah, it’s cold. I shouldn’t have worn these shorts.”

“In the first place, you are wearing a long sleeve and a cardigan. Why would you wear shorts? Did you not expect it to be cold?”

“I thought the heat from the top would balance with the chill from the bottom. But it doesn’t seem to work that way. Just like in cooking, the balance between cold and hot must be very important.”

“Well, we are chefs after all. This type of habit isn’t bad.”

“Not bad but cold.”

Anderson shook his head left and right. Then, as if he could not hold back anymore, he started to speak.

“Hey moron, if it’s that cold, put your cardigan around your waist.”

“.....Ah. Anderson. I didn’t know before, but you’re actually kind of smart.”

Anderson’s cheeks started to turn red at Jo Minjoon’s response.

Market. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth after looking at the fish available on display.

“For restaurants, do you think there are places that get their ingredients from large supermarkets rather than street markets like this?”

“More places probably get their stuff from super markets. If they have enough care to go to a street market, unless there was one right by them, they would probably go make direct contracts with fish suppliers. At our place, each ingredient is procured directly from the suppliers.”

“That sounds fun too. Going place to place, looking at the quality of the ingredients. Wouldn’t it feel like you were playing a puzzle game?”

Jo Minjoon started to smile, as if just thinking about it was fun.

Anderson raised an eyebrow and looked towards Jo Minjoon.

“Why are you looking at me like that.”

“.....The more I think about it, from the beginning, you romanticize so much about running a restaurant or things like that. How are you like that? You know what you need to know now. You know it isn't just a relaxed and cushy job and that behind the glitz and glamor, there's a significant amount of stress. Look at Samuel yesterday. Even someone as amazing as him cared so much about our opinions, even if it may have been for the camera. It's a difficult job. A painful one too.”

“Of course I know. Why wouldn't I know?”

Jo Minjoon stopped looking at the face of a Pacific saury and turned his gaze towards Anderson. When their eyes met, Anderson shivered for a second. Half a year. No matter how deep someone's mind may be, it was enough time to generally understand what was in someone's mind.

But every so often, there were times like this when Jo Minjoon showed him an expression that was hard to understand. It was like he was an elder who had more life experiences than he did; his gaze was full of sweetness and affection.

‘.....Maybe it's because he had planned on becoming a teacher?’

There was no time to come up with an answer. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“But Anderson. Even that difficulty is entertaining for me. Of course, in the moment, my chest feels stuffy and it is painful, but maybe it's because work and play is the same. Whenever I'm in front of the countertop, my chest gets tense more than any other time. Rather than wasting my life, if I think about the fact that I am doing what I'm supposed to be doing.....just that thought makes me full.”

“Must be great to be full.”

“I’m sure you’re full too. You’re just like me.”

Anderson briefly opened his mouth at Jo Minjoon’s words. Jo Minjoon looked like he had some confirmation about Anderson, but initially, Anderson did not have that confirmation. Anderson hesitantly opened his mouth.

“What.....just what is it that you believe in me?”

“Passion.”

There was no hesitation in that answer. Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon after hearing him speak as if it was an obvious answer.

“My.....passion?”

“If you didn’t have passion, you wouldn’t have woken up at this early hour to make breakfast. Don’t you agree?”

Anderson briefly shut his mouth. His eyes headed towards a lady who was shopping in the market at this early hour. He started to speak in a quiet voice.

“I’m not such a straightforward person as you think I am.”

“I never thought you were like that?”

“.....My feelings for cooking...rather than passion, it’s closer to affection.”

“Why.”

“It wasn’t my decision.”

Anderson gave a short answer. But that short answer was full of all sorts of complicated emotions stuffed down and echoing everywhere.

“It wasn’t my decision. It was because of my parents. Ah, I’m not saying they forced me to do it. However, they only ever showed me one path. At first, I thought that was obvious, but the older I got, the more I hated it. Without looking at anything else even once, without being able to breathe even once, just walking down this

one path. It even felt like my life was not my own but my parents'. So....."

Anderson's eyelashes turned downward. If you think about Anderson's pride, it wouldn't have been easy to say something like this. It wasn't that Jo Minjoon was a great person to cut down his pride. The reason was simple.

Jo Minjoon was his friend.

"That's why I participated in Grand Chef. My life, I wanted to make it mine. I wanted to do it on a path I decided for myself. I also wanted to verify whether I could love this path."

".....Yes. I remember you saying once that you wanted to get out of your parents' shadows."

Hiding behind those words were very deep levels of agonies and worries. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. The gaze he was looking at Anderson with was soft, but his voice rang strongly.

"You got out of it. Anderson. I'm not saying it because you are good at cooking. You....."

Jo Minjoon briefly closed his mouth. He wasn't good at saying such sappy things. At least he didn't consider himself to be that way. However, it was something he wanted to say at least once.

"You're my rival. I wouldn't be rivals with someone who doesn't even like cooking."

After saying that, Jo Minjoon quickly turned away and started to inspect the fish. He was getting itchy just thinking about what kind of look Anderson was giving him. It was at that moment. Anderson's voice slowly came out from behind him.

"I'm glad you are my friend."

Jo Minjoon did not respond.

There was no response needed for something so obvious.

The cooking did not start right away after they came back from shopping. Jo Minjoon and Anderson first sat at the table looking through each other's recipes. They needed to think about the composition of the entire meal, the harmony of the ingredients, and the anticipated results for following the recipe.

In the midst of that, Jo Minjoon and Anderson were both admiring each other. For Anderson, it was at Jo Minjoon's creativity in coming up with a recipe, for Jo Minjoon, it was Anderson's knowledge of ingredients that came out every time he talked. Anderson started to speak.

"You, just....how could your level be so high after learning at home through the internet? This makes no sense."

"I had a fabulous internet teacher."

"Who is it? I've never seen anyone so amazing as I looked through the internet."

"Kaya."

Anderson frowned at Jo Minjoon's short answer. He soon started to speak in a grim voice.

"You're not talking about Kaya Lotus, right?"

"I am."

".....Stop joking. Kaya only started to appear on the internet after the broadcast. How could you learn by looking at Kaya before that?"

Jo Minjoon smiled but did not answer. It was impossible to explain it anyways. However, he was at least able to tell himself that he did not lie to Anderson.

"First, let's talk about our distribution."

"What distribution? Our roles?"

"Yes. If you think about it, our distribution has always been very primitive. It was always one of two methods. Each person makes

one dish. Or one person is in charge of the ingredients and the other is in charge of the fire. Isn't there something more efficient, that would bring out the best of the person's abilities?"

They were full of enthusiasm to find a better method. Anderson quietly stared into the sea bream's eyes before opening his mouth.

"We must become one body."

".....What?"

"What the heck is up with your expression. I mean that we must move like we are one person! Something like a person with four arms. My thoughts become yours and your thoughts become mine. If we move like that, we can perfectly complete everything."

"If we do it wrong, it could end up making things more complicated as well."

"To prevent that, let's make sure we are on the same page with the recipe and composition before we begin. Then it should be a bit better."

Jo Minjoon nodded his head. The recipes they shared were similar to basic homemade Japanese meals. It was their last day in Japan, and at the same time, the end of their time spent together like a family. The reason they picked something casual was because at least for this last meal, rather than a commercial dish, they wanted to share a meal like a family would.

The configuration was simple. White rice. At first, they thought about adding mushrooms and making mushroom rice, but unless they were using rice as a main dish, it didn't seem like a good decision to add any other ingredient to the rice.

For fish, they picked the sea bream. To cook it, they cut off the meat and put the sea bream, soy sauce, mirin, and sugar in a broth made of water, rice wine and turnip, and braised it. In addition, there was a beef and potato stir-fry, roasted ginger pork, and clams steamed in rice wine.

With that, they had pickled cucumbers and pickled cabbage, sprouts flavored with salt and walnut oil, and cold tofu to complete the entire composition.

They did not say anything special. Jo Minjoon and Anderson continuously looked at each other's condition. That did not mean that they were not focused on the dishes they were responsible for. Rather than saying they were inspecting each other's condition, they were paying attention to the entire kitchen. It was like both of them became head chefs at the same time. If there was a difference with a normal head chef, it would be that there were two of them and that they were both working on the line.

It was a pretty fresh experience, and a beneficial experience as well. Cooking is something that could easily go wrong if you are not focused every minute while you are cooking. To pay attention to everything while eloquently handling the knife and pan in their hands, was harder to do than you think.

However, that made it more entertaining. The feeling that your brain and body were reaching their limit was so exciting that it was hard to describe with words. Specifically, not paying attention to how many points the dish was going to get made the whole experience completely different. The flame embracing the pan seemed brighter and more beautiful than normal, and the handle of the knife seemed to be wrapped in their hands more comfortably than usual.

‘Cooking.....yes. It was something like this. This type of fun.’

Not paying attention to the score it will receive, each and every moment of the cooking process was like playing, and felt exhilarating. This was real cooking. Jo Minjoon had a small smile that you could barely see. It was small, but it was a more honest and clear smile than any other time.

Even their teamwork, which was a bit awkward at first, started to slowly become perfect. If Jo Minjoon moved, Anderson quickly

filled that spot. And when Anderson thought he was going to need an ingredient, Jo Minjoon immediately handed it to him without being asked. They were each paying attention to one another's presence and their actions, while listening to the kitchen's noise.

Anderson could feel his heart beating quickly. At first, he felt like he was being controlled by Jo Minjoon. However, that wasn't it. They were exchanging tons of words without actually talking, and communicating well with each other. It was a feeling he had never felt before. It felt like there was someone who could completely understand him.

So once the cooking ended, Anderson had a disappointed expression on his face as if a fabulous movie just ended. Then he looked at Jo Minjoon with those disappointed eyes. But it was weird. Jo Minjoon was looking at Anderson, no, to be specific, he was looking at something next to Anderson.

However, even if he looked in the same direction, Anderson could not see anything. It was at that moment. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. He spoke in a very envious voice.

“.....Congratulations, Anderson.”

[Anderson Rousseau]

Cooking level: 8

Baking level: 7

Tasting level: 8

Decorations level: 7

Chapter 159: The Reason They Are Hungry

(3)

Of course, there was no chance of Anderson understanding the reason behind Jo Minjoon saying congratulations. Looking at Anderson's confused face in front of him, Jo Minjoon was actually surprised. He really meant it when he said congratulations. Although there was a feeling of envy, it was not to the level of being called jealousy.

Why was this the case? It's probably not because his friendship with Anderson was getting closer. Even when Kaya reached level 8, Jo Minjoon was jealous of her.

‘I wonder if I have changed.’

It wasn't that the strings of tension had loosened. The excitement was still there. However, unlike before, a feeling of helplessness never came over him.

Maybe this had something to do with the fact that he was not so focused on the score of a dish anymore. Rather than being pushed around by the score, he was now treating it as more of a guide. The impact of that change was not small at all.

Morning. As the staff watched on, the six members sat together happily around the table. Maybe it was because it was their last meal in Japan and the last meal of the journey, but nobody could easily lift their utensils. They were all feeling a sense of loss. Emily spoke up in a somewhat complicated voice.

“When I work, there have been many times i had to go eat on my own. It's been a long time since I ate like this with other people. Thank you, everyone.”

“Food is always better when you are eating together. Especially when you are eating Eastern food.”

Jo Minjoon smiled lightly as he spoke. They started to eat. Sera

burst into admiration every time she put her chopsticks into her mouth. She started to speak in a quiet voice.

“It’s amazing. Even though it’s home-style cooking, it still feels very elegant.”

“At some point, the perception of home-style cooking changed to be considered cheap and lacking, but that’s not the case. For example, I still can’t forget the taste of the galbi-jjim I ate at my grandparents’ house at New Year’s day when I was younger.”

When he thought about it, that was one of the tastiest home-style meals he had ever eaten, and it was Korean food. As Jo Minjoon was reminiscing about the taste in his mind, Anderson stared at him with an unfamiliar gaze. Jo Minjoon was not like this in the past. Maybe it was because of his mom’s bad cooking, but Jo Minjoon did not have much affection or faith in home-style cooking. He had always shown a focus and respect for fancy dishes.

‘He changed. Quite a bit.’

It would be fine to say that he improved. It was like he had stepped outside of the fence that was holding him in.

Was it more sentimental because it was their last breakfast? They were more talkative than usual, speaking a lot and having deep conversations, talking about the delicacies they’ve eaten in their lives, and past that, talking even about life. They even said some compliments about each other as well (TL: Makes it sound like they normally put each other down or something).

Of course, as warm as the atmosphere was, it was also a bit embarrassing. But the feeling was a good one. Even as he was eating, Jo Minjoon suddenly thought about that. ‘If I could just create a restaurant where all customers could have a meal like this.’

However, that kind of restaurant was impossible unless it was called ‘home.’ You wouldn’t be able to read into the hearts of each

and every customer. This became even harder the larger the restaurant got.

“So, Martin. Are you planning on making Season 2?”

“That’ll depend on the number of viewers. If it is over a million, then the chances are pretty high.”

“Huuuuu, I’m not sure if it’ll be possible.”

“Since we inherited Grand Chef’s broadcast time slot, we may get a better result than expected.”

It was possible that the viewers felt like this was a spinoff of Grand Chef. Jo Minjoon and Anderson. Two of the most popular chefs from Grand Chef were appearing on this show afterall.”

“So, if there is a Season 2, do you have any desires to participate again?”

Emily, Sera, and Jeremy nodded their heads. As epicureans, they had no reason to reject participating in a show like this. However, Jo Minjoon and Anderson looked towards Rachel, and Rachel shook her head.

“I think it will be difficult. Now, I have to go and restart my restaurant, and these children will have to be with me.”

“You know.....it feels like you are stealing my participants. I’m getting a bit jealous.”

It was funny because Martin’s sad expression had eyes like a teenage girl. Rachel smiled softly before speaking.

“If you come to our restaurant, I will treat you to a delicious meal whether it is for a broadcast or not.”

“That’s a pretty fabulous offer. Can I come even without a reservation?”

“If there is no room, we will even put a table in the hallway for you.”

“That..... I don’t know if that’s VIP treatment or a street cat treatment.”

“I’m just joking.”

Rachel smiled softly. Martin looked at Rachel smiling like that and spoke as if he was surprised.

“Did you know that the atmosphere around you has changed quite a bit since you first showed up during the filming of Grand Chef?”

“How was I when I first got there?”

“Hmm.....I’m sorry to be saying this, but you looked kind of tired. Your shoulders were heavy and your smile was absent. But now.....you are shining. Your eyes, your smile.”

Jeremy shivered and flexed his hands as if it sounded too cheesy for him. Rachel glared at Jeremy for a bit before looking at Martin again and smiling.

“Back then, a lot of things were still covered by the fog. But now, many things are clear. I even have these two handsome disciples. Minjoon, andour Duksam.”

“.....Ah, teacher.”

Anderson, whose smile was starting to form at being called her handsome disciple, quickly turned red and looked at Rachel with hurt eyes. Jo Minjoon laughed and spoke.

“Don’t you remember? You said it last time. That you’ll continue to use the name Duksam.”

“I said that so you could feel how much damage a joke you made could have on a person’s life!”

“Yes, I’m feeling it pretty well right now. It’s amusing. I guess I’m even feeling a bit remorseful deep down in my conscience?”

Jo Minjoon laughed while he answered. Anderson did not respond. Anderson lifted his chopsticks. The pointy chopsticks dug

into the sea bream's meat like two sharp spears.

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[The plane will take off shortly. All passengers should fasten their seatbelts.]

“.....I get a weird feeling everytime I get on a plane.”

“Me too.”

Sera, who was sitting next to him, opened her mouth. Maybe she had something to discuss with him; she pushed Anderson aside as he tried to sit next to Minjoon and took the seat for herself. The plane slowly began to lift its head towards the sky. The ticklish feeling of your organs being pulled was pleasant but unfamiliar.

“It must be nice for you Sera. The life of an epicurean must be like this all the time right?”

“Why? Are you envious?”

“Definitely. Of course, that doesn't mean that I want to be an epicurean.”

“I heard Emily tried to make you into an epicurean.”

“She did. I turned her down. I enjoy cooking more than eating.”

Even if the whole world changed, it was one belief that would not change. The airplane slowly started to stabilize itself in the air. Jo Minjoon looked outside the windows at the cotton-like clouds that filled the sky. Sera looked at his face before slowly opening her lips.

“Thank you.”

“.....Have I done anything that deserves a thanks from you, Sera?”

“Yes, yes you did. You gave me a stimulus.”

Jo Minjoon silently looked at Sera's face. ‘The world's sexiest epicurean.’ A title fitting a third-rate magazine. However, what Jo

Minjoon saw wasn't the allure of her sexy lips, but the determination flowing through her eyes. It was an expression only those people who have made an important decision could show. It was clearly visible on her face."

"Your relationship with Anderson. The passion for cooking. Your natural talent and unwavering spirit. All of those came as big shocks to me. It made me look back at how I came into this field in the first place."

".....Sera, how did you end up becoming an epicurean?"

Normally, wouldn't you expect someone to say 'because I liked food?' However, the answer Sera gave was definitely not normal.

"It was because of Emily."

".....What?"

"I looked up to Emily ever since I was young. She was an older sister I liked. Well, to be specific, she was an older sister I looked up to and respected. She's cool. Emily. Ever since I was young, I wanted to be like her.....and once Emily became an epicurean, I decided I needed to be one too."

It was such an unexpected answer that Jo Minjoon was speechless. Whether she was short in thought, childish, or if not that, the maybe just pure, he couldn't tell. Sera laughed, as if his thoughts were visible on his face.

"I know. It was a very thoughtless decision. That's why I still have such childish concerns."

".....The trigger is definitely unique. However, Sera, I don't think it is a childish concern. It's a concern that everybody has. No matter how sure you are about your path, motivation alone is not enough for you to be confident that you picked the right path. Plus, Sera, regardless of your motivation.....you still worked hard."

"How do you know? For epicureans, rather than feeling the taste of a dish, it's more about how well you can express your feelings.

It's also focused on your looks or personality to see if you have what it takes to be a star. There are many people who claim that I made it as an epicurean only because of my looks. Minjoon, have you never thought that?"

"Never."

He was not just saying it to be respectful. If he did, it would be difficult to look directly into her eyes as he answered. That's why Sera could not help but wonder. She couldn't understand the faith Jo Minjoon had about her abilities.

However, she did not ask for the reason. Regardless of the reason, it felt nice to be trusted. Sera smiled brightly as she opened her mouth.

"It feels nice hearing you say that. Also, there's no reason to have such a look of concern on your face. I will not be shaken anymore. Rather, I am just greedy. Just like how you and Anderson have accepted each other, and everybody else has also accepted the two of you as rivals, one day, I will also get there."

Sera turned her head. At the end of her gaze was Emily, who was chatting with Anderson. Jo Minjoon smiled and started to speak.

"If you have a desire not to lose, you're already rivals."

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LAX. Los Angeles Airport. Jo Minjoon slowly took a step forward.
'Once again..... USA.'

His chest was tickling. On this foreign land, thinking about how he would be cooking for strange foreigners.....just thinking about the future already filled him with sorrows and happiness, and he felt like the fruits of his labor were already in his hands.

"I guess this is goodbye."

"Hmm. I'm sure we will see each other again someday."

Jeremy answered in a distinctly casual but subtly disappointed

voice. Of course they didn't have many reasons to see each other again. They were all busy people, and unless they were participating together on a show like this, to even coincidentally run into each other, the US.....no, the world was too big.

"Everybody, thank you for everything. The next time we meet, I will make you even tastier dishes."

"I'm looking forward to it. And I'm thankful as well. When Minjoon opens a restaurant in the future, I will make sure to visit."

"Maybe you'll end up having your wedding at my restaurant, Emily."

"Oh, please, stop teasing me like that."

Emily's face turned red. In the midst of everyone giggling, Martin slowly walked over. He put a smile on his face.

"Everyone, thank you for following along without causing any issues. Well, not that we didn't have ANY issues at all..."

Martin's eyes quickly headed towards Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon turned his head away with a guilty look on his face. Martin started to laugh as he spoke.

"Anderson. Minjoon. I've already spent over half a year with the two of you. I hope this relationship can remain beautiful in the future."

"There's no reason it can't remain like this."

Jo Minjoon suddenly felt a strange sensation. Martin was just the program's PD, however, it felt like Martin was a benefactor who gave him a great opportunity. Maybe it was because he was responsible for Grand Chef, the program that changed his life. Jo Minjoon put forth his hand.

"Thank you for everything, Martin."

Martin stared at Minjoon's hand before slowly shaking it and smiling so widely that he had wrinkles on his face.

The conversation continued a little longer, but as with all things, it could not continue forever. The broadcast was over, and the traveling was done. It would be nice if the path in front of them was wide enough for them to all walk together, however, a person's path was full of many forks in the road.

Rachel opened her mouth.

“Let's go.”

Neither Anderson nor Jo Minjoon asked where they were going. For now, they were just following after Rachel's footsteps. Her path. They were sailing with her as her sailors.

Chapter 160: Party Members Wanted (1)

Venice. When hearing that word, many people may think about Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice.' And of course, they will think about it as the location in Italy.

Venice is definitely in Italy. However, the Venice Jo Minjoon is currently in was not in Italy, but in California, located in the West side of LA in the Santa Monica neighborhood. Beach. Although it may be expected to be lined up with fancy buildings and hotels, in reality, the neighborhood mainly consists of old villas and tiny apartments.

But that gave the neighborhood an odd but beautiful nature. People wearing swimsuits and casual outfits intermingled with each other, and many were on the bridge with no destination, enjoying fishing or hiking.

It was difficult to tell the tourists apart from the locals, and this gave the beach a mysterious feeling. Was it an illusion? Or was it real? The main store for Rose Island was located here on Venice Beach.

The main store was not that big. The height was close to a two story building, however, it was still just a one story building. The building could have been pulled out of ancient Greece, with its walls covered in white paint and the blue roof in the shape of a dome. The pillars resembled the Shrine of Olympus, and there was even an open balcony with windows decorated with wood.

If it was located anywhere else, it might look plain or even old-fashioned. However, paired together with Venice Beach, it was as if the building and the beach were helping to bring out the beauty of each other. Plus...

‘.....Even those people are taking part.’

In front of the restaurant. Jo Minjoon had his hood on covering

his face while looking at the crowd of people in front of the restaurant. He was afraid, thinking about having to push through that crowd, but he had no other choice. From what he had heard, even before Rachel came back to LA, people were gathering in front of the restaurant like that.

There were various types of people. The tourists who wanted to see the famed main store of Rose Island for themselves. Reporters who wanted to get an exclusive interview. And of course, hopeful chefs who wanted to gain Rachel's approval and become her disciple.

It was at that moment. As Jo Minjoon hesitated before pushing through the crowd, a multiracial woman looked back quickly before her eyes opened wide.

“Uh, you Minjoon! You're Minjoon, right?!”

“What? Where?”

“Wow, it really is Minjoon!”

“Can I take a selfie with you?”

With them smiling so happily while asking, it was difficult for him to say he was busy and decline. In the end, Jo Minjoon was caught in the crowd and forced to give out some signatures and take pictures. Of course, not everyone was like that, but even with only a small portion of them doing so, time quickly passed by. Furthermore, the reporters did not stay still either.

“Minjoon, how do you feel about working at Rachel's restaurant?”

“There are many stories currently out about the opening date of Rose Island. Do you know the exact date?”

“How do you plan on organizing the kitchen personnel?”

Many questions poured out. Jo Minjoon avoided answering the questions by saying ‘there are many questions I cannot answer

right now,' before quickly walking to the entrance. He could hear the continued clicking of the cameras and the reporters' questions continued to chase after his footsteps, but once he went through the door, they could no longer follow after him.

"Tsk. Tsk. Your problem is that you are too nice. Why do you deal with all that nonsense?"

He could hear Anderson's voice. Jo Minjoon let out a tired sigh before entering the hall. Forty chairs were laid out without an owner. He didn't realize how much he would appreciate this peacefulness.

"Where is Rachel?"

"In her office. Either way, did you do what I told you to do?"

"Yes, I signed up."

"Hand over your ID."

Anderson and Jo Minjoon were talking about the Starbook account that Minjoon kept pushing back from opening. Anderson briefly looked at Jo Minjoon's settings before frowning.

".....You already have 800 fans?"

"Is that fast?"

Anderson did not answer. 800 people in just one day. It took him almost a whole week to get to that number. With a frown still on his face, Anderson pressed the top of his screen. A few moments later, a notification came up on Jo Minjoon's cellphone.

Minjoon has entered the chatroom.

[Hugo: Oh, Minjoon finally made a Starbook account.]

[Anderson: I made him do it.]

[Hugo: The number of his fans is no joke. He may even hit 1,000 by the end of the day.]

[Minjoon: This is quite odd. I've never chatted like this before.]

[Joanne: Minjoon! Nice to see you. Chatting like this makes me feel like I'm seeing you for real.]

[Minjoon: It sure does! It feels like we're back in the competition.]

[Joanne: Should I tell you a secret? Kaya wins that competition!]

[Mijoon: Ohhhhhh, that's surprising.]

Jo Minjoon laughed while looking at his phone. They had been in communication via calls or text, but having everybody in one chatroom felt different. Anderson snorted as he spoke.

"See, I told you you should open an account."

"If you told me there was a group chat feature, I'm sure I would have opened it earlier."

The reason Jo Minjoon created a Starbook account after all this time was because of this chatroom. This was 2010, before apps focused on chatting were created (TL: Hello? AIM was around way before 2010...and MSN Messenger...just to name a few...)

[Ivanna: I'm jealous. Both of you. I want to work at Rose Island too.]

[Minjoon: I am not working yet. There's many things on the restaurant level we need to take care of before opening, and even when we open, I can't work.]

[Joanne: Oh? Why?]

[Ivanna: Are you hurt?]

[Minjoon: No, nothing like that. It's just an issue with my Visa. It's going to take at least another 2 months or so for it to get approved.]

[Joanne: Then you just have a tourist visa right now?]

[Minjoon: Yup. So I can't work right now.]

Although he didn't currently have a paycheck, there was no

issues with his everyday life. First of all, Jo Minjoon was currently living at Rachel's house. If he had to buy something, he still didn't have to worry. It wasn't only because of the money he made appearing on Hunger Trip. In his wallet was a debit card Rachel had given him.

[Joanne: Either way, it must be great. Working with Rachel Rose! You've got it made, Minjoon.]

[Minjoon: I heard you were recently scouted to be a head chef. You can't say that to me.]

[Joanne: It's a small restaurant with five tables. I'm too embarrassed to call myself a head chef.]

[Minjoon: Don't say that. No matter what anybody says, you are still a great head chef.]

[Ivanna: By the way, Kaya and Chloe aren't here. I'm sure they would be happy if they knew Minjoon joined.]

The moment Chloe was mentioned, Jo Minjoon looked at his screen with an awkward expression. Then, even though they could not see him, he still fixed his expression. He was still in contact with Chloe, but seeing other people bringing up Chloe made him feel a little odd. (TL: I believe that is called a guilty conscience Minjoon. What have you been doing behind Kaya's back?)

There was no news from Kaya lately either. At first, he thought she was angry because of the 'you need to lose some weight' comment Anderson forced him to say.....but that's probably not the only reason. She was having limited contact with everyone else as well.

[Anderson: She must be in the middle of filming. She's busy lately.]

[Marco: Oh? Minjoon is here.]

[Joanne: You're late, Marco.]

“Minjoon. Anderson.”

The two of them who were absorbed in their chat windows heard a stern voice behind them. The two of them slowly turned their heads around. There was an old man with his white hair combed over nicely who was looking at them with a cold gaze. Jo Minjoon and Anderson immediately stood up from their seats.

“Mr. Diaz, you’re here.”

Isaac Diaz was his name. Initially, he seems like a stern person who would be hard to deal with, and indeed, he was that way. The fact that Jo Minjoon still could not call him Isaac and called him Mr. Diaz should help explain just how difficult it was to talk to him.

“The head chef is calling you.”

“Oh, okay.”

Just because Isaac was hard to deal with did not mean that he was a bad person. He was just stiff. He would give soldiers in war a run for their money, and he was always sharp. You could tell that just by looking at his clothes. There were no wrinkles in the sleeves and the shirt was crisply ironed. Just as the color of grilled meat changes its taste, his clothes also showed his personality.

As such.

“Oh, you are here.”

“Yes, I brought them over.”

When he was in front of Rachel, he was like a little boy, or maybe a gentle grandfather. Hearing him talk like that was actually more foreign as the difference was pretty severe. It was to the point that Anderson and Minjoon who did not like to gossip, would gossip with each other about whether the feelings Isaac had for Rachel was a one sided crush.

It had already been four days since they arrived at LA, and since

Hunger Trip ended. But Anderson and Jo Minjoon haven't changed their routine much. To be specific, that was the case for Jo Minjoon. To him, LA was still a foreign area. Four days was a short amount of time to learn the area and its laws, as well as knowledge of daily life.

It was a different story for Anderson. He had grown up here ever since he was young. Anderson's parents, Fabio and Amelia's house and restaurant was only five minutes away from Rose Island's Venice location. And that.....

"Oh, Rachel. You've already opened. Minjoon is here as well. It's been a while."

It meant that they could come to Rose Island whenever they wanted. Jo Minjoon answered in a stiff voice.

".....Hmm, it's been about ten hours. Since I saw you when you came to take Anderson home last night."

"It seems like I need to explain to you how long and valuable ten hours is. It's enough time for a raw chicken breast placed in the Sous Vide machine to turn into an inexplorable treasure. And for a broth boiling in a pot....."

"Mom! Please! I'm begging you. Are you plan on nagging Minjoon like this now too?"

"Anderson. I've always been saying this to you. No matter how much you don't want to listen, you can't consider what your parents are saying to be nagging."

Anderson let out a sigh. Then, like all children who have had to deal with their parents' nagging, he just stopped responding. That was always quite an effective method. Amelia continued to talk to Anderson for a little bit longer before turning to Rachel.

"It's amazing. There's a ton of people setting up camp outside."

"Half of them are here to see the place or old regulars. The other half are reporters or chefs. Lately, there are many people asking

me to accept them even as a stage.”

Stage. If this was a company, it would be comparable to an intern. Cleaning, washing dishes, and even wiping off the chef's sweat. The stage was a person who did chores like that. The problem was that even people who were qualified to be demi chefs at other restaurants were willing to degrade themselves as a stage to work here.

Jo Minjoon slightly headed towards the window and looked outside the front entrance. Then he expressed his admiration. There really was a lot of people gathered there. There were definitely at least fifty people.

‘Rachel teachershe really is amazing.’

“The two of you know what kind of teacher you are learning from right?”

Yes, I am still in awe about it.”

“But you should also be a bit worried. Rose Island, specifically, this Venice location, is known for overworking their chefs.”

“.....Is that so?”

Jo Minjoon slyly looked at Rachel. Rachel was still looking at them with a calm expression, but why was it that it made him scared? Anderson opened his mouth.

“Anyways, why are you here right now? Even if it isn't time to open yet, shouldn't you start to prep?”

“Don't worry. Your dad will go back soon to inspect things.”

“.....What? Why do I need to go?”

Fabio responded as if this was the first time he was hearing about this. Amelia just silently glared at him. As Fabio made a sad expression and lowered his head as if he was admitting defeat, Rachel started to speak.

“I called them over. I needed a bridge.”

“Bridge?”

“There are quite a few people who are extremely angry with me. I needed someone to mediate for us.”

“.....Can I ask who that person is?”

“Jack Hudson.”

Rachel immediately answered Jo Minjoon’s cautious question. Of course it was a name Minjoon did not know. Rachel continued on in a slow, faint voice.

“He was the old pâtissier here.”

Chapter 161: Party Members Wanted (2)

Pâtissier. The general perception of a pâtissier was that they were bakers, and in reality, the majority of their work was related to baking. A pâtissier's original location was in front of the oven. All cooking related to an oven was supposed to go through a pâtissier's hands, however, depending on how the internal battle for territory in the kitchen went, the story could change.

‘A pâtissier that even teacher Rachel wants to hang onto.....’

Even though he didn't know the name, the person must not be average. As if he could read the anticipation in Jo Minjoon's eyes, Anderson leisurely started to laugh.

“If you taste his bread, you wouldn't even want to put any other store's breads in your mouth.”

“Stop exaggerating. No matter how good it is, how could there be bread that makes you not want to put any other bread in your mouth.”

“.....I'm just ... figuratively speaking.”

After becoming a liar in an instant, Anderson started to grumble in an upset voice.

It was definitely not an easy task to get out of the restaurant. The same crowd from when they were entering were still surrounding the store, and their eyes were focused on the main entrance. Thankfully, it was only tens of people now, but the moment Rachel and the others took one step out that door, the focus would be on them, and it was certain that more people would start to gather.

“.....How do we get past that?”

“First, everybody get in the car.”

Anderson pointed at the 9-passenger SUV in the parking lot. Before they headed outside, Rachel turned her head to look at

Isaac.

“Isaac. I leave the restaurant to you while we are gone.”

“Are you confident that you can convince Jack? You know how stubborn that fellow is.”

“I’m not sure. Either way, it’s not unusual for Jack to get angry.”

“The situation is different than last time. Jack’s been angry for the last 10 years.”

Jo Minjoon started to look through his memories after hearing Isaac. The main store also closed 10 years ago, so does that mean they have never met since then? Rachel frowned for a bit as if she was not confident, but soon enough, as if she had made up her mind, the frown disappeared.

“If he gets angry, I just have to accept it.”

With that, the four of them stepped outside the door. After watching them through a window, Isaac soon let out a deep sigh.

“That won’t be your only problem.”

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[.....This is the next news story. Rachel Rose has returned to Rose Island, which has been called a ghost restaurant in Venice for almost 10 years. Together with her was Grand Chef competition’s runner-up Anderson Rousseau, and Jo Minjoon, who came in third place.]

[That’s great news! It’s like LA has gained another three star restaurant.]

[Well, it isn’t a real three star restaurant. After being closed for 10 years, it has lost its stars. If you think about the Rose Island from 10 years ago, three stars wouldn’t be a problem, but that’s only if Rachel has not lost her touch during her break. In addition to that, the absence of her former husband, Daniel Rose, is also a problem.]

[I believe that Rose will be successful. True talent does not rust

even over time. I'm also very interested in her two new disciples. Anderson, Minjoon, I'm personally a fan of both of them.]

[The funny thing is that Anderson Rousseau is the son the Rousseau couple, owner chefs of restaurant 'Glouto' that is next door. He's pretty much battling it out with his parents. Right about now, they.....]

Click. The radio turned off. Anderson let out an awkward cough. Amelia started to speak with a gentle expression. Of course, her voice was not gentle at all.

"Did you hear what that DJ was saying?"

"No, I didn't hear it. I'm focused on driving."

"He said that you couldn't stand being at Glouto?"

"What? There was nothing like that!"

"Since you know they didn't say that, you must have been listening. You dare to lie to your own mother?"

Anderson started to frown. Jo Minjoon started to laugh while looking at Amelia.

"Don't blame him too much. I'm sure Anderson will mature soon enough."

"I wish Anderson grew up a good kid like you. Maybe it was because you grew up in an Asian family, but you're a really good kid. Your parents raised you well."

".....Mom, you know that's racist."

"Does this generation call even something like this racist? I'm only talking about a positive aspect."

"Whether it is good or bad, a stereotype is a stereotype."

"Fine. Your mom was wrong."

Amelia raised both of her hands as if she was giving up. This was the first time Jo Minjoon had seen Anderson win against his mom.

After a moment of awkwardness, Jo Minjoon slowly answered.

“To be honest, I was quite envious of Anderson. I’m sure everyday would have been great growing up with such great chefs such as Amelia and Fabio. At least during meal time.”

“Hoho, I’m glad you would say that. It’s sad that I’ve never heard something like that coming out of Anderson’s mouth. Should we just take you in as our son, Minjoon? What do you think? They say a rock that has rolled in can push away a rock that is stuck, maybe you could push Anderson aside and become the future owner of Glouto.....”

“We’ve arrived.”

Anderson coldly answered as he stopped the car. Amelia glared at the back of Anderson’s head for cutting her off, but Anderson was not able to see her glare.

Jo Minjoon slowly got out of the car. Santa Monica, a side street next to Clover Park. It looked like they had modified homes and turned them into stores. There was just a basic sign that said [Bread]. It had no personality whatsoever.

The funny thing was that, regardless of such a simple sign, there were a ton of customers. Jo Minjoon felt around his pocket. Thankfully, he had his wallet.

“Rachel, can I buy some bread?”

“Let’s go in first.”

Jo Minjoon hastily started to walk. The aroma of bread at the edge of his nose was too fragrant. There were also numerous system windows that started to pop up. A series of 8 points. They didn’t add any special ingredients and simply baked the dough, but even without any cream or other additions, it was still 8 points.

If you were to compare it to cooking, it would be like making pasta noodles without any sauce and having the dish score 8 points. Since the basic bread was at that level, you didn’t even need

to talk about the ones with cream, cheese, jam or other additions. There were plenty of 9 point breads as well, but no 10 point bread could be seen.

There were some dishes that were still good even with a low score, but Jo Minjoon had never seen a dish with a high score that was mediocre. Unless it was not a flavor you enjoyed, you couldn't help but call these bread delicious.

Jo Minjoon's eyes glittered as he put a crispy doughnut, scone, and a croissant in a basket. He then headed towards the counter. The cashier was a memorable white lady with green eyes. She looked to be about 30 years old.

"How much is it?"

"Five dollars and thirty cents."

"Here you go."

Jo Minjoon took out some cash. The woman opened the register before speaking. She had a gentle smile on her face, and did not seem to be annoyed at all. Her sweet and gentle voice made him think of a stewardess.

"Will you eat here?"

"Yes."

It was the moment Jo Minjoon was about to eat the bread after staring at it lovingly as it was placed on a plate in front of him. There was a voice from behind Jo Minjoon. It was Rachel.

"Lisa?"

".....Rachel?"

It was the first time there was a wrinkle on her calm face. She looked at Rachel with nervous eyes. Rachel searched behind Lisa with anxious eyes.

"Is.....Jack in?"

“That’s what you have to say after coming here for the first time in 10 years? Just.....”

“I hope to meet with Jack.”

“I’m sorry but I don’t think my father would want that.”

Lisa answered in a stern voice. In her eyes, there was no nostalgia against this person who had never contacted them for the past 10 years. Rather, her eyes were filled with a bit of uncertainty. Right as Rachel was about to ask about Lisa’s gaze, Amelia, who was just watching them from the back, stepped forward.

“Lisa, wouldn’t it be good to just let the two of them meet? There’s no reason for them to reduce each other to crumbs, but you can’t just put a band-aid on an open wound and call it good. You need to get it treated.”

“.....Treatment? That’s fine. But that treatment should have come ten years ago. What does she want to achieve by showing up now? Amelia, you know how my dad is these days.”

“Did something.....happen to Jack?”

Rachel cautiously asked after listening to Lisa. Lisa looked upset for a second before seeing the line of customers behind them and letting out a sigh.

“.....Fine. Go through that door over there. I have to take care of the customers.”

“I’m sorry Lisa. Let’s talk again soon.”

Lisa did not respond. As Rachel and Amelia started to walk, Jo Minjoon secretly looked down at the paper box. He slyly took a scone and bit into it. He couldn’t help but smile at the happiness spreading in his mouth, and Anderson just looked at him with ridicule.

Jo Minjoon’s ears started to get red as if he was embarrassed. Anderson asked him.

“Is it good?”

Jo Minjoon nodded his head without talking.

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“I think.....it’ll be best for me to speak to him alone.”

“Will you be okay?”

“It’s our issue. The two of us need to take care of it. But, if it seems like our discussion will get rough, can I ask you to step in to mediate at that point?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you.”

The hallway in front of the living room. Rachel stood still, calming her heart. It was beating quickly. This was the first time she was feeling this way since Jo Minjoon agreed to come to her restaurant. The tremor then was from happiness, but right now, it was from anxiety. That was the only difference.

There was an old man standing next to a fireplace that only had ashes left. Rachel’s feet stopped. The old man, Jack, was staring at her with his eyes. She would have found it to be normal for his eyes to be full of anger, however, that was not the case. Jack spoke with a calm voice.

“It’s been ten years.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t think about apologizing, since I have no plans to accept your apology. The reason I am not raising my voice right now is not because I forgive you, but because I don’t have the energy to do so. Rachel, ten years ago, you let everything go, saying you could not run Rose Island without Daniel.”

“.....Yes I did.”

“You’re selfish.”

Jack spoke in a tired voice. Rachel noticed that her friend had become old with the flow of time. Jack slowly continued to speak.

“Rose Island. It was a store for you and Daniel. However, I also had memories about the time I spent with the two of you, as well as dreams about the years to come. The moment you crumbled..... my life also crumbled with it. You should have persevered. No matter how sad and heavy the burden may have been, you should have persevered.....!”

“At that time, I.....had fallen in a swamp. I had no confidence nor desire to swim out of it. I’m sorry.”

“So? Did you find it now? What is it? What was it? What is it that made you finally come looking for me after not contacting me even once for the last ten years?”

“Hope.”

Jack’s eyebrows wrinkled. Rachel hurriedly continued to speak.

“I found a child who was like Daniel. The world that he saw, I’m confident this child can feel it and make it his own. With it, he can help restore Rose Island’s old glory.”

“In the end, it’s still about Daniel. I know. He was a genius. He shined brightly. However, do you plan on devoting your life to imitate his light?”

“It’s not an imitation. If I had planned on imitating it before calling it good, I wouldn’t be able to stand in front of you and show my face. Believe me.”

Jack silently looked at Rachel. It was a heavy and hurting gaze. She wanted to look away, but she couldn’t avoid it. It was something she had to handle. Jack slowly started to speak. His voice that was full of pain, sorrowfully started to echo.

“It’s too late, Rachel. Ten years is too long of a time.”

“I know. I also know it’ll be hard for me to earn your forgiveness.

That's why I'm begging you. Just once.....just close your eyes this one time. We can bring back our old kitchen." (TL: Close your eyes this one time is like saying look past it.)

"Like I said. Rachel, ten years is a long time."

Jack lifted his hand. The moment he lifted his hands out from underneath the blanket, Rachel's eyes were full of shock. It was not because there were too many wrinkles on those hands.

His hands were shaking. It was so bad that you couldn't help but wonder if he could even hold up a cup. It was not hands that could mold dough. Jack spoke in a shaking voice.

"If you had shown up a little earlier.....just even by a few years, if you had come thenI would have been angry, but in the end, gone back to you. However, Rachel, I am unable to do so now."

"Jack, this.....how....."

"Why did it take you so long to come, Rachel. Why did it take so long?"

Tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks. The regret and remorse, his crushed dreams, they were all melted into those tiny teardrops. The tears wet his lips and his words.

"Ten years Was too much."

Chapter 162: Party Members Wanted (3)

Why did she do that?

Why did she think that she was the only one who was getting older and sick for the last ten years? There was nobody who could be free from the effects of time.

Rachel, who was standing upright because she could not sit down, fell onto the couch as if she had lost all strength in her legs. Jack looked at Rachel with tears starting to form in his eyes. Rachel shook her head in disbelief.

“That’s not possible. You were clearly selling bread.....”

“Lisa is now thirty years old. If you start counting from when she was young, it’s been over twenty years that she’s been working with dough. If you are looking for talent, there should be nobody better than her.”

The conversation stalled. Rachel could only stare at the empty fireplace with a blank expression. Her thoughts were jumbled. No, actually, there were no thoughts in her head at all. There was just a terrible sense of helplessness and guilt surrounding her. It was at that moment.

“Grandpa.....”

A short and chubby girl started to speak in a drowsy voice. Rachel slowly turned her head. At the end of her eyes was a young girl wearing pink pajamas. Thick eyebrows, curly brown hair, and her small lips that were covered by her hand that looked like a tiny dumpling, the girl was letting out a cute yawn. Jack smiled gently as he reached out his hand.

“Ella. You woke up.”

The girl named Ella fell into Jack’s arms. Rachel felt strange watching Jack’s hands gently tapping Ella’s back. His hands could not mold dough anymore, but could hold his granddaughter. That

truth was warm.....but also felt cold.

“Is she Lisa’s child?”

“Yes. Ella. Say hello. This is Rachel. Grandfather’s.....”

Jack stopped talking for a second. He briefly made eye contact with Rachel before looking at Ella again and smiling softly.

“Old friend.”

There were no grandfathers who could say negative things in front of their granddaughters. Well, as long as they had love in their heart that is. At Jack’s words, Ella looked at Rachel and smiled brightly.

“Nice to meet you! My name is Ella!”

“Yes. Nice to meet you. You look just like your mom.”

“Heh, my mom is pretty. Oh, grandpa, I need to go to the restroom.”

“Okay, go ahead.”

Ella swiftly ran towards the restroom as if she was being chased. Rachel, who was looking at Ella from behind with a smile slowly started to talk.

“Her father?”

“I don’t know either.”

Rachel looked towards Jack. Jack started to mumble in a sad voice.

“No matter how much I ask Lisa, she won’t tell me. Maybe even she doesn’t know who the father is.”

“.....Lisa is a good kid. That’s not possible.”

“Hmph. Where in the world would you find a good girl who lives without her husband and tears her father’s heart into pieces. But more than that, Rachel. You didn’t see how that kid has been living for the past ten years.”

“But I saw the 20 years before that. The Lisa I watched grow up is definitely not immature. Even now, she is taking good care of you by your side. She’s also followed well in your footsteps.”

“Don’t act all gentle after all these years. I don’t want my heart to falter again.”

“.....The debt I owe you, I promise to pay it back.”

“How?”

Jack quickly asked. However, Rachel did not know how to answer that short question. Jack did not get angry and started to speak in a calm voice.

“If you don’t know, I will tell you the way. Whether you follow it or not is up to you, Rachel.”

She did not worry about it. She did not have the qualifications to worry about it. Rachel answered.

“I will follow it. No matter what it is.”

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“.....Is it that you can’t read the mood or won’t read the mood?”

Table. Jo Minjoon had finished all the bread that he had ordered, and had bought more things, such as tortillas, hot dogs, and sandwiches as he continued to eat. Anderson could not understand Jo Minjoon right now. He’s not the type to be oblivious, but seeing Rachel being serious like this, how could he still be so calm?

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth in a relaxed voice. However, he did not open his mouth to answer, but to take a bite of the tortilla filled with tomato sauce and cheese. Anderson spoke in a harsh tone.

“Answer my question.”

“What is there to answer? It was neither can’t read nor won’t read.”

“Then how are you so relaxed?”

“There’s nothing that’ll change with me being serious. How do you act when your parents fight? Will you also become serious and start to raise your voice?”

“.....I wouldn’t do that.”

“It’s the same thing. Rachel teacher and ah, Mr. Jack Hudson. Regardless of what they talk about, us going up there and throwing around our weight won’t do any good. FYI, when adults are fighting, the role of the children is to innocently smile brightly.”

“I understand what you’re saying.....”

“So eat. I’ve seen you eyeing the bread since earlier. Be honest. You want to eat it too.”

Anderson turned red at Jo Minjoon’s words. The breads truly did look delicious. Since he skipped breakfast, the smell of carbohydrates and butter felt sweeter than normal. (TL: What kind of smell does carbohydrates have?)

In the end, Anderson grabbed a sweet potato cake. Just like that, he emptied his plate two more times, and when he went up to make a purchase for the fifth time, Lisa stared at them like they were strange.

“Our store does not want to make a customer suffer from stomachache. Are you sure you’ll be okay eating more?”

“Do you think delicious food will harm a person?”

“I’m not sure. They do say that medicine is bitter while poison is sweet.”

“I’m not sure because I’ve never eaten poison.”

“.....I’m not speaking from experience either. That’ll be \$4.40.”

Around the time they started to head back to their table, the number of customers started to dwindle down. The reason was

simple. They were already running out of bread. Earlier, there was so much bread you couldn't help but wonder if they could sell it all even if they were open all day, however, being able to see the bottom of the stands already, Jo Minjoon started to shake his head.

“Do all US bakeries do this well?”

“Of course not. You must know since you've tried their bread. They're different than normal bakeries.”

“Now that you mention it, you must come here often. Do you know Miss Lisa as well?”

“We recognize each other. But we aren't close.”

“Not surprising. You're not the type to be friendly with people.”

Anderson frowned but did not reply since it was the truth.

Rachel's conversation ended up going longer than expected. When the door soon opened, Anderson and Jo Minjoon both turned their heads at the same time, but only Amelia came out. Amelia sat down next to them before speaking.

“Huuuu, it's tiring. Can I eat one of these breads?”

“Of course. Please eat it. How's the situation?”

“I'm not sure. It's neither good nor bad. Reconciliations are always like this. The feeling of abandonment is always like this too.”

He understood reconciliation, but could not understand what she meant by abandonment. As if she could read what Minjoon was thinking, Amelia started to nibble on the rye bread with cream cheese while speaking.

“Ah, you probably don't know about it yet. Mr. Jack has already retired. Not because he wanted to, but because his body could not handle it anymore. He's no longer in a state where he can bake.”

“.....That's such a sad story. Then just why.....?”

Jo Minjoon stopped in the middle of his question as if he figured it out. His gaze was on the bread in Amelia's mouth. Amelia nodded her head.

“Lisa is a brilliant baker. Jack is no longer able to stand in front of an oven. In that case, there's some meaning for the daughter to fulfill her father's last dream in his place. Plus, past that, the two had to meet at least once.Right? Lisa.”

Amelia smiled brightly as she turned around. Lisa approached them and looked down at Amelia with a dull expression. She started to speak.

“Amelia. You can't do this.”

“Even you knew this was homework that needed to be completed at some point.”

“.....My father is very tired.”

“Once he can get past today, he might actually end up gaining some strength.”

“Minimally, you could have given me a call beforehand about the situation.”

“I guess that's true. Sorry. That was my fault.”

The apology was too fast. Lisa looked like she had something else to say, but she was unable to say it and just ended up sighing. Amelia put the last piece of bread in her mouth and looked behind her. There were no customers and there were no breads left on the stands. She started to speak in a disappointed voice.

“Do you have anymore spare bread?”

“I have some dough. Should I give that to you?”

“.....I'll just fill myself up with some jam.”

Amelia grumbled in a disappointed voice. It was at that point that the door opened and a small girl, Ella, walked quickly as if she was alarmed. Then, she bent over so much she looked like she was

falling down, before hugging onto Lisa's leg.

“Mommy!”

“.....Ella. Mommy told you that you can't walk around in your pajamas.”

“Yes.....but I like my pajamas.”

“You have a pretty daughter.”

Jo Minjoon spoke honestly. The little girl was very cute and adorable. She would be comparable to the child models on TV. Ella peeked at Jo Minjoon after he spoke, and with a look of embarrassment, she laughed before hiding behind Lisa's leg. Lisa let out a sigh.

“Ella, please don't pull on mommy's clothes. Mommy's clothes will stretch.”

Although Anderson was not the type to like children, even his gaze was quite gentle while looking at Ella. It was at that moment that they could start hearing footsteps heading towards them. Jo Minjoon's smile was gone from his face as he stood up from his seat.

“The conversation.....did it go well?”

“It did go well, but.....”

Rachel stared at Jo Minjoon with a strange expression. Jo Minjoon could not understand the meaning of her gaze. At that moment, Jack reached out his hand after staring at Jo Minjoon.

“My name is Jack Hudson.”

“Jo Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon shook Jack's hand. Did he have arthritis? Although his hand was shaking, it was not odd. Once they let go of their handshake, Jack started to speak.

“Rachel says you are her new hope?”

“Teacher does say good things about me.”

“Then, do you think it’s misplaced hope?”

It was a casual question, but not one that could be casually answered. Jo Minjoon vigorously opened his eyes before answering.

“No matter what kind of expectation teacher has of me, I will make sure to live up to those expectations.”

“.....Even if she asks for some unrealistic expectation such as bringing her a star from the sky?”

“She’s not the type to have such unrealistic expectations.”

“No, that’s where you are wrong. I am being extremely serious when I say this, but this friend is crazy.”

Rachel’s lips moved for a second. It looked like she was about to say something, but since she was guilty for how she acted the last ten years, she could not say anything about it. Jo Minjoon held back his laughter before speaking.

“I know that teacher used to be pretty bad in the past.”

“.....The only one who this bad girl could not stand up against was Daniel. Daniel had something Rachel didn’t have. I don’t know whether to call it intuition or whatever. But anyways, I hate this selfish old lady, however, I have to admit one thing. She’s one the top five chefs in the world. You.....will need to fill the area that such a person is lacking in. Even then, are you still confident that you can meet her expectations?”

“Yes.”

Jo Minjoon did not hesitate even for a moment. Jack started to frown. However, it did not sound like Minjoon was speaking with arrogance from a youngster’s lack of knowledge. Jack started to speak.

“I’ve heard that you have absolute taste. Yes, that is definitely a

special talent. I'm sure that one day, you will be a chef that everybody will know about."

"Mr. Jack. I've never considered my absolute taste to be special. It's a little more sensitive than average. However, that is it. The reason I am not worried about meeting teacher Rachel's expectation is not because of my tongue."

".....Then what is your reason?"

"The fact that dishes taste better the more you devote yourself to it."

After saying that much, Jo Minjoon looked to his side. There was about a finger-length bit of a brioche still remaining. It was an 8 point dish. Jo Minjoon immediately put the brioche in his mouth. Then he slowly started to read the system window that slowly opened up in front of him.

"I can tell a lot of things by just eating this brioche. After making the dough, every time you spread the butter, you let it rest for three minutes. I can also tell that you used four egg whites and five egg yolks when you made the dough."

Instantly, Jack's eyes started to shake. It was the same for Lisa who was next to him. They had heard plenty of rumors about Jo Minjoon, however, for him to prove it with bread that they had made, it was a weird feeling. Even Ella, who was still hugging Lisa's leg, had a look of shock.

"However, all this does is give me some information. In the kitchen, as a chef, the things I need to think about are not much different than anybody else. Absolute taste? I can see a completely different world with the power of my absolute taste? Of course it does give me some help. However, the customers that we serve are people who have a regular sense of taste. I'm not much different than any other chef."

".....Fine. Let's consider that to be the case. Then what is the

reason Rachel should trust you and rely on you? If there really is no worth to the special nature of your tongue, which part of you is it that Rachel must find worth in?”

“My sincerity.”

It was an unexpected answer. He thought there was some special talent Jo Minjoon would bring up, but that was not the case. Jo Minjoon could not do that. If talent determined everything, if your limit was determined from the moment you started.....he could not stand such a reality.

He did have some talent. Even without the system, his tongue was sensitive, and his intuition when it came to recipes was creative, but still realistic. However, that was not an overwhelming talent. Overwhelming talent, that was something that Kaya had.

That’s why talent had to be a wall you could overcome. Kaya’s rival. He could not accept that it could all end without him ever getting there. Jo Minjoon continued on in a boiling voice.

“I’m sure many people live by putting sincerity on their plate, however, I also have the vitality, youth, and desire to push forward. Just as a dish taste better the more time you put into it, I believe it must be the same for chefs.”

“But you must know that that is not the reason Rachel likes you.”

He felt his heart clench. Yes, although Rachel was looking at Jo Minjoon, she was not looking at the real Minjoon. She was looking at the Jo Minjoon with absolute taste that was drawn in her mind. Jo Minjoon briefly bit his lip. At that moment, Rachel put a hand on Jo Minjoon’s shoulder.

“No Jack, you’re wrong. Minjoon’s tongue is not what I rate highly.”

“Then what is it?”

“Minjoon. The person.”

At this unexpected answer, both Jo Minjoon and Jack were at a loss of words. Ella, who had been looking at the three of them with wide eyes, pulled on Lisa's clothes. As Lisa turned her head, Ella motioned for her to bring her ear closer. She quietly whispered in Lisa's ear.

“What is it, Ella? Are you hungry?”

“Mommy, how was that mister able to guess how we make our bread?”

“.....Yes. He did. Were you surprised?”

Ella vigorously nodded her head. Six years old. It was a very young age, however she had seen many people who came to look for Lisa to ask about the recipe and returned without any success. The recipe for bread was a mysterious question nobody could solve. To her, Jo Minjoon, who was able to solve that question.....

“Is that mister a fairy?”

“Huh?”

“Mommy said that nobody could find out our bread recipe. Since he can figure out something nobody can find out, he must be a fairy. Right?”

She didn't know what kind of logic was going through Ella's head, but it would actually be weirder for a child's deduction to be realistic. Lisa just nodded her head. At that moment, a non-realistic conclusion was formed in Ella's head. Jo Minjoon is a fairy. There was only one fairy she knew about. That led to a conclusion. Ella asked with a shocked expression.

“That mister..... is Tinkerbell?”

Chapter 163: Proclamation (1)

Ella's eyes were full of betrayal. Jo Minjoon, who had been eavesdropping on the conversation from the side let out an awkward laugh while looking at Ella. Ella turned red as if she was about to cry, and after trying hard not to cry, just silently started to hug Lisa. As if saying 'I can't do anything about this child,' Lisa smiled brightly as she pinched Ella's cheek.

"Don't worry. That mister is a different fairy, Tinkerbell is someone else."

".....Really?"

"Yes. Really."

A mother is truly different with her child. The expression she had been showing them was completely different than the one she showed Ella. They thought she was a stiff and difficult person, but her expression as she consoled Ella was gentle and warm.

The atmosphere between the two of them lessened the tension in the room. Rachel whispered in a quiet voice.

"Jack. At least you still have a family to make you feel warm inside."

"It's the last treasure I have left."

"Should we start our conversation?"

Jack did not answer. Rachel accepted that as his silent approval and slowly started to head towards Lisa. Lisa slowly started to speak.

"I can predict what you are going to say to me."

".....I assume I will say exactly what you are thinking. But first, I want to start with an apology. Could you accept my apology?"

"You have no reason to apologize to me. The person you treated cruelly was my father, not me. Of course, it would be a lie to say

there is no hatred in my mind about you; what kind of daughter could look kindly towards someone who was cruel to her father?”

It was a calm and composed voice, however, the emotions that needed to come out were all present. Rachel lowered her gaze as if she had nothing to say, and ended up making eye contact with Ella. Ella stared at Rachel with a confused expression before starting to smile. Ella’s smile comforted Rachel and even gave her a bit of courage, along with some shamelessness.

Rachel started to speak.

“Yes, I’m sure you cannot look kindly. Then I guess it’ll be difficult for you to listen to my proposal that I’m about to share with you kindly either.”

“Yes. I don’t want to work in your kitchen. However, that is not because of my personal feelings, Rachel. How could I trust you? You’ve already given up on a kitchen once. I am a mother. I don’t want to pour any of my time to someone who may disappear at any point.”

Each and every one of Lisa’s words could not be refuted. Standing in front of Rachel who could not respond, Lisa looked towards Jo Minjoon.

“Earlier, you talked about sincerity. My father was sincere just like you. How can you be confident that she won’t throw you away just like she did to my father?”

“.....I trust my teacher.”

“I’m sure you do. You haven’t been hurt yet. However, I’m not sure. I have a hard time believing.”

Lisa wasn’t just speaking based on her emotions. She was just talking about the past and present. This was the reason Rachel could not say anything about it. How could she, when she had already betrayed them once.

That is why, from the beginning, there could only be one person

to convince Lisa. Jack started to speak. The man who had been waiting for ten years started to speak.

“Lisa. Once.....how about you give her one chance?”

“.....Dad. Do you know what you are saying right now? It’s been ten years. You want to trust someone after one day when they have been betraying that trust for ten years?”

“I’m not saying I will trust her. It’s just giving her a chance. A chance to clean her regret away. For Rachel, as well as for myself.”

For myself. Even Lisa could not help but get weak at those words. Jack let out a sigh.

“Of course, if you say no, there’s nothing to be done. It’s just that I am getting greedy as a father. It’s not that I’m expecting you to fulfill the dream that I could not achieve. I know you are running this store very well. However, I hope that you could live more peacefully and more abundantly. And if Rachel, this terrible person, does not run away with her tail between her legs again..... this will end up being a great opportunity for you.”

“It’ll be a great opportunity for all of us, Lisa. We ate some of the bread you had out there. You are as talented as your father.”

Lisa bit her lower lip as she looked down at Ella. She started to rub Ella’s chin as she started to speak.

“I cannot close this store. The customers will be disappointed, but more importantly, the thing that is most important to me is having a stable life.”

“.....Yes. Of course. I understand.”

Rachel nodded her head with a disappointed expression. At that point, Lisa was hesitating before she continued.

“At dawn, I need to bake bread. Once it becomes breakfast time, it should become easier to handle. If it is only lunch and dinner, I should be able to go there. You won’t be open in the morning

right?”

Rachel started to smile with a face that looked like it was about to cry.

“Of course not.”

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Anderson left with the car to take Amelia to the restaurant, leaving Rachel and Jo Minjoon at the bread store. Rachel looked like she still had a lot to talk about, but Jo Minjoon could not easily leave. The reason was simple.

“Our Ella is really drawn to Mr. fairy.”

Jack smiled gently as he looked at Ella. Ella started to smile widely while nodding her head. It was like any other good grandfather-granddaughter relationship. If there was one issue, it would be where Ella was sitting. She was not sitting on a chair. She was sitting on someone’s legs. It wasn’t Lisa’s legs nor Jack’s legs but Jo Minjoon’s legs.

Maybe her childish mind really believed Jo Minjoon to be a fairy, but Ella did not seem to think about leaving Jo Minjoon’s side. At the same time, she didn’t seem to have the courage to talk to him and just sat there playing with the large lemon pound cake in her hands. (TL: Poor Amelia could have eaten that pound cake.)

‘.....To be okay sitting on his legs but yet having a hard time striking up a conversation.’

Children’s minds were always complicated in weird places. Ella tore off a bit of the pound cake and put it in front of Jo Minjoon’s mouth. Jo Minjoon smiled on reflex and looked at Ella.

“Are you giving it to me to eat?”

Ella nodded her head and waved the cake in her hand. Jo Minjoon received that cake like a baby bird and started to eat it. Ella laughed shyly before turning her head and looking at Lisa. Jo

Minjoon swallowed the cake before asking.

“Is Ella usually this shy?”

“It’s normal for her to be shy. You are the fairy-nim of legends.”

“Ella. Do I seem like a fairy?”

“.....Yes!”

Ella twisted her body before vigorously nodding her head. Her hair fluttering around tickled his arm. That was the beginning. Ella started to slowly ask questions. What does Peter Pan look like? Have you met Cinderella? Where is the mirror that tells you who the prettiest person in the world is? Every time she asked a question, Jo Minjoon had to become a fairy tale author and come up with a story.

Rachel looked at the two of them before whispering to Jack.

“I envy you. You have such a wonderful family.”

“Seems like you plan on treating that young man like a family member.”

Rachel calmly looked at Jo Minjoon after listening to Jack’s words. Family. It was a word she had not spoken in a long time. Rachel calmly answered.

“I’m thankful. He’s someone who can achieve my dream, no, our dream.”

“I thought that there were no dreams that someone else could achieve for you, but now it is difficult to say that since in some aspect, Lisa is fulfilling my dream.”

“Isn’t that the life of old folks like us? Putting our hopes in the next generation.”

Jack had a disgruntled expression and tried to speak, but could not retort.

Ella and Jo Minjoon’s discussion had at some point moved to

Santa Claus. Jo Minjoon asked Ella.

“So Ella, are you confident that you’ll be receiving a present this Christmas?”

“Yes. Uh, ah.....but, uh.....does Santa Claus really not give you a present if you cry?”

“Hmm. If you throw a tantrum and cry, you’ll be a bad girl, so he won’t give you a present. However, if you cry for a different reason, wouldn’t it be okay? Like if you were to cry because you got hurt, for example.”

“Uh.....last time, our neighbor Matilda was showing off that she went on a trip with her dad. I cried because I wanted to see my dad. Am I a bad girl?”

Jo Minjoon looked towards Lisa, whose face had become stoic. Jo Minjoon consoled Ella with a gentle voice.

“You are not a bad girl. So don’t worry. Santa Claus will definitely give you a present.”

“Really?”

“Of course. That’s why you need to listen to your mommy and be a good girl.”

“If I do that, can Santa Claus bring daddy here?”

Ella blinked her large, teary eyes as she asked. To have to mix in some lies in front of those innocent eyes, it hurt Jo Minjoon’s heart. Jo Minjoon removed the crumbs on Ella’s cheek as he answered.

“I’m not so sure about about. But instead, this mister can be Ella’s uncle.”

“What is an uncle?”

“Umm.....just think of it as a mister who you are close to. The type of mister who gives Ella whatever she asks for and listens to Ella’s worries.”

“.....Ella. Stop bothering the mister and come over here. Mommy will warm up some milk for you.”

“Okay.”

Ella followed Lisa into the house. Jack let out a sigh before clenching his fist.”

“I don’t know what kind of punk her dad is, but the day he ends up in my hands will be the day he dies.”

€

The conversation continued for a little longer before Anderson returned and picked them up. Rachel seemed to have a lot to think about as she did not say anything, and Jo Minjoon was the same way. Ella was pure and cute, but it was because she was that way that he was feeling sad.

‘Was Kaya.....similar?’

Kaya had grown up in a similar situation to Ella. Realistically, she grew up in a worse situation. Ella’s family did not have any financial issues, while Kaya had to help her mom at the market and interact with rough adults while taking care of her sick younger sister.

Maybe that was why his heart was hurting so much looking at Ella. Kaya must have had some similar pains during her childhood. Jo Minjoon looked at his smartphone. The messages he sent to Kaya a few days ago still had not been read.

‘Will Kaya end up meeting her dad again?’

He did not know. Whether it didn’t happen, or it did happen but there were no articles about it, or maybe he just did not see any information about it. At least in his memory, there was nothing relating to Kaya’s dad. Jo Minjoon had an expression on his face as if he was trying to solve a difficult math problem and leaned his head on the headrest. Anderson peeked at him before speaking.

“Hey Tinkerbell.”

“What.”

“Why do you have such a dark expression. You said it went well.”

“It did go well. We ended up with a pâtissier.”

“Then why?”

“It’s just so sad. Ella’s situation. Lisa’s as well. It even made me feel bitter for them. It also made me think of Kaya.”

Anderson nodded his head as if he understood. Jo Minjoon turned his gaze outside the window. Coincidentally, a married couple who were taking a walk while pushing a stroller caught his eyes. Looking at them, Jo Minjoon started to mutter in a quiet voice.

“If I had a cute daughter like Ella, I would definitely not leave her.”

“Seems like you really liked that little girl.”

“Rather than liking her.....she just keeps remaining on my mind.”

“Don’t think too much about other people’s situations. Do you know how many single parent families are in California? Actually, just in Venice? If you worry about everything, it’ll just make your life difficult.”

“They are not just strangers anymore. They are part of our kitchen family.”

“I got nothing to say when you put it that way.”

With that, the noise of the engine was the only thing that could be heard once again. The first person to start talking again over that noise was Rachel.

“Our family will continue to grow. Minjoon. Anderson. As demi chefs, you must take good care of the new people we bring in. Of

course, you also have to listen well to the sous chefs we will hire as well.”

“We will keep that in mind.”

“Soon.....”

Rachel, who was about to say something else, closed her mouth. The car soon arrived in front of Rose Island. This also meant that they were visible once more to the crowd gathered in front of the restaurant.

Their eyes were shining brightly across the dark tinted windows. Anderson lifted a pair of thick sunglasses that might belong to a secret service agent and asked.

“Do you need a pair?”

“No. I guess it’s about time we give them the scoop they’ve been waiting for.”

Once she finished speaking, Rachel opened her car door. As Jo Minjoon and Anderson abruptly started to follow after her, Rachel started to slowly head towards the crowd. Flashes started to go off, and a multitude of questions, as well as fanfare and the sound of clapping started to spread around them.

“Everyone.”

All the noise quieted down once Rachel started to speak. Jo Minjoon and Anderson who were watching her were in awe. Maybe it was because she was used to this type of situation. Even though she was in front of a lot of people, Rachel’s voice was strong and did not shake. It was loud enough to reach every person’s ear.

“I’m sure each of you may have a different reason for being here. Some of you just came to see the main store of Rose Island with your own eyes, and some of you want to be a part of my kitchen. And I’m sure some of you are here to get an interview with me.”

“When will Rose Island reopen?”

“Please take me as a chef! I will work hard even as a station chef!”

“Right now, I will be sharing two confirmed facts with all of you. First.”

Rachel stopped breathing for a second and looked behind her. She was looking at Rose Island. The faintness in her eyes turned into fiery passion in a split second. A booming voice started to come out.

“I plan on reopening Rose Island’s main store. The date is set for November 20th, and it will not be changing. Second. To get the best chefs in our kitchen, there will be a public audition. The available positions are demi chef, and prep cook, as well as apprentice. The audition will be on August 20th, exactly 3 months before the opening date. This public audition will be harsher than any other auditions. For that, the judges for the audition will include.....”

Rachel slightly turned her head. The moment her eyes were about to reach Jo Minjoon, she started to speak loudly again.

“My disciples, Minjoon and Anderson.”

Chapter 164: Proclamation (2)

‘The real Rose Island’ has appeared.

The name Rose Island was not foreign to most Americans. There were 12 locations throughout the United States, and around wide, there were a total of 37 restaurants with that name hung across their entrances. All of the head chefs were disciples of the Rose couple, and they were all really close with each other that at one point, they even had the nickname of ‘The Rose Division.’

However, the thing that made Rose Island famous was neither their skills nor their friendship. In order for a restaurant to be called Rose Island, they needed to get the complete approval of the Rose couple; the disciples who proceeded with that name would not do anything to smear their masters’ brand. As there were no Rose Island locations without a star in the Michelin Guide of recommended restaurants, it only made sense that the general public had a good understanding of the Rose Island name.

That was why it was terrible for the main restaurant to have been closed for 10 years. The older generation, as well as many epicureans, had always claimed Rose Island’s main location to be the best of them all, and the chefs of the other locations did not reject that notion. Since they could not go to the main location, how much must have the epicureans imagined and desired that taste?

The situation was different now. Rachel Rose publicly announced to everyone gathered in front of Rose Island’s Venice location that the restaurant will reopen along with a New Chef Audition. The judges for it were going to be Rachel Rose, as well as Anderson Rousseau, runner-up of the Grand Chef competition, and Jo Minjoon, who was known for his absolute taste. As everybody was focused on whether Rachel Rose could overcome this 10 year long break, in the midst of that.....

Janine Fischer: The people auditioning are going to be facing hell. A world-renowned chef, an absolute taste, and Anderson as judges.

↳Yulia Lott: Anderson's not that difficult, no?

↳Janine Fischer: @Yulia Lott Think about how Anderson is on a normal basis. He'll be ruthlessly blunt with them.

".....That's what they are saying. What do you think about it?"

Jo Minjoon smiled as he showed the screen to Anderson. Anderson skimmed the feed before snorting.

"When was I so blunt? I definitely wasn't as blunt as you were."

"When did I do that?"

"Don't you remember Peter?"

"Peter? Oh, him."

He had to think for a moment, but he remembered. He was the Indian guy who got scolded by him after fighting with Kaya in the past. Jo Minjoon let out a 'hmm,' before asking curiously.

"Do you know what he is doing these days?"

"He seems to have been completely burnt. People didn't have any good opinions about him. After showing that type of personality, unless they were planning on doing some noise marketing, no decent restaurants would hire him."

".....If you think about it that way, I do feel bad for him. If it was anywhere else, it would have just been a minor incident, but it just had to be on broadcast that he got a negative stamp on his life."

What did he tell Peter who was extremely disappointed? If people hate him, take in all the hate and use it to grow. Jo Minjoon had no way of knowing how much of that warning Peter listened to, and how much he had grown.

"How's Kaya? Do you chat with her these days?"

“.....What’s gotten into you? You never ask about Kaya.”

“I’m asking because I’m worried you might be concerned. She hasn’t been around in the chat room either.”

“I’m not sure how she’s doing. She may be suffering by herself again. She doesn’t seem to be contacting the others much either.”

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh with a frustrated expression. Maybe her feelings about not causing him to worry had grown compared to before, but that growth was not necessarily sweet.

[Me: Are you very busy?]

Jo Minjoon looked at his phone’s screen with a blank expression. Since she does not answer even when he calls, he felt like he was losing by even just calling. Anderson peeked at Jo Minjoon and remembered what Amelia had said to him on their way back.

‘See, it’s a lot of suffering outside of home, isn’t it?’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘No matter what, at least your mom and dad love and cherish you the most. But Rachel isn’t like that. Are you confident you can turn her gaze around?’

He hated the fact that he could not confidently answer that question.

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The audition was already only four days away. Jo Minjoon’s current routine was simple. Other than working out to maintain his health, he was always stuck inside Rose Island’s kitchen. What he was doing in the kitchen was simple. Cooking, and eating. Of the two, Jo Minjoon was more often than not, eating.

“Hmm.....try the carrot soup with this red wine bread.”

“The pairing doesn’t seem to work too well. Because of the unique bitter smell of the red wine, if you don’t make the soup a bit sweeter, I don’t think it’ll taste right.”

“You think we should fix the soup? Or should I fix my bread?”

“I don’t think there’s a reason to do that. Hand me that butter roll.”

At Jo Minjoon’s request, Lisa handed over a butter roll in the shape of a beautiful conch. Jo Minjoon ripped apart a piece of the roll and poured the carrot soup on it before eating it.

“How is it?”

“It’s perfect. If we improve the soup a little more, we should be able to give it to our customers. As it is right now, I feel like it is a bit too simple.”

After listening to Jo Minjoon, Lisa also tried the butter roll and carrot soup together. If there was a difference, it would be that she dipped the roll instead of pouring it. Lisa nodded her head.

“It is definitely much better. The soft taste of the butter and the sweetness of the carrot seem to create a perfect harmony. You really live up to your nickname of absolute taste.”

“.....It’s something any chef in the world can do, Lisa. It just seems more natural because of the nickname I have.”

“I like that modesty of yours. I also think it is amazing. If it was me, I think I would be extremely arrogant.”

Although she was speaking with a stoic expression and without even a trace of a smile, it was quite a nice and gentle. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly.

“Lisa, you are amazing as well. You wake up early to put the bread in the oven and make the dough for the next day. After that, you come here to work until after dinner. I don’t even know when you find time to sleep.”

“I may look really dedicated, but I sleep the full amount I need to sleep. While the bread is baking, while waiting for the dough to rise, I just make good use of the waiting periods.”

“That is the definition of dedication.”

Lisa just shrugged her shoulder at Jo Minjoon’s words. From the bar facing the hall, they heard two tapping noises. When they went to take a look, Ella, who was wearing a yellow one-piece, was tapping her chin at the edge of the bar while looking towards them.

“What’s going on, Ella?”

“I’m hungry.”

“Hmm. Lisa, what should we do?”

“Since that’s the case, we might as well eat lunch. When are Anderson and Rachel supposed to come back?”

“Grocery shopping should take at least one hour.....so it’ll probably be better for us to eat first.”

With that, the table was set. All they had ready was soup, but Jo Minjoon was a chef. It wasn’t hard for him to make steak or two plates of pasta within ten minutes.

The dishes were pretty simple. Caesar salad, carrot soup, spaghetti alle Vongole, and steak tenderloin with cheese cream sauce. Jo Minjoon had to go back and forth between the kitchen and the table a few times in the middle, however, watching Ella smile while getting sauce on her lips made him feel like his fatigue was being completely washed away.

“You must be happy. You have a beautiful daughter like this. I wish I could be like this too.”

“Do you even have to worry? You are handsome and your girlfriend is beautiful too. I’m sure that if you were to have a kid, they will be beautiful.”

“.....Girlfriend?”

“Ah. Anderson did mention that if I bring up Kaya Lotus in front of you, that you would deny it.”

Listening to Lisa, Jo Minjoon put a dice-sized piece of steak in his mouth with an awkward expression. Surrounded by the soft texture of the cheese cream, the special flavor of the steak tenderloin spreading through his mouth was stylish yet comforting. Lisa started to speak.

“Are you going to be okay? That has cheese in it. You said it’s not good for your stomach.”

“I need to start training it. How could a chef have food that they cannot eat? Since it is just a stomachache and not an allergy, I’m sure I will get used to it the more I eat it.”

At that moment, as Jo Minjoon randomly turned his head, he noticed that Ella was watching him with a tearful expression like the world had just ended. Jo Minjoon’s eyes opened widely as he looked at Ella.

“What’s wrong, Ella? Is something stuck in your throat?”

Without responding, Ella started to cry and used her hand to wipe her tears. Then, she looked at Lisa while sniffing. Ella asked a question. Her voice was shaking, as if she had received a large shock.

“Mommy. Minjoon.....has a girlfriend.....”

“Yes. He does.”

Even though it might be reasonable to lie to your daughter when they were asking with tears in their eyes like this, Lisa just bluntly answered. It made sure that Ella’s tears continued on. Jo Minjoon, who pretty much figured out the situation, did not know whether he should be happy or not as he looked at Ella.

Ella strained to get off the chair as she headed to Jo Minjoon and looked at him. Why was she staring at him like this even though he had done nothing wrong? Ella held Jo Minjoon’s hands tightly as she asked.

“Minjoon. Are you going to marry that girl?”

“What do you think I should do?”

“Ella doesn’t want Minjoon to go.....but if you really have to go, I’ll let you go. Ella can handle it.”

“Let’s blow your nose first. Here, blow.”

Jo Minjoon took out a napkin and brought it to Ella’s nose. Ella blew into the napping and then, with a red nose and cheeks, her lips seemed to start to frown.

That expression was very cute. What kind of thing was this kid saying? Once Jo Minjoon lifted Ella to sit her back in the chair, Lisa spoke casually, like as if she was talking about someone who was not present.

“Looks like you’ve stolen my daughter’s heart.”

“Surprisingly, I must be popular with the children.”

“They say that children like pure people; Minjoon, you must be that type of person. Kaya must be happy. Although I’ve never met her before.”

“Even I can’t remember the last time I saw her. It’s been about a month. We haven’t even talked in over a week.”

“You can’t contact her?”

“I don’t know. Maybe she’s busy or.....I can’t say it. If I say it, I’d be talking about Kaya’s life without her consent.”

Jo Minjoon answered in a bitter voice. Lisa took a drink of water with a contemplative expression and slowly continued to speak.

“Don’t overcomplicate things. There are only two reasons a woman will not contact you. She is either no longer interested or it is a sign saying please contact me. Have you done anything wrong recently?”

“Not that I can remember.”

“Then you have your answer. Call her.”

“I tried to call her and text her, but she has not responded. Whether she is busy, or avoiding meit’s probably the latter. No matter how busy you are, there’s no way you would not look at your phone for over a week.”

He could guess the reason. Kaya said it herself last time. She didn’t want to rely on him. She didn’t want to put any burdens on him. He could not figure out what the right answer was. Should he respect Kaya’s wishes, or should he still try to protect her? Lisa laughed as she answered.

“At least I confirmed one thing. There is no man who would struggle so much like this when there is no relationship. Why do you keep saying there is nothing? Nothing will change if you admit it.”

“.....If there was no relationship, there is no point to struggle like this while being apart. Since there is nothing between the two of you.”

“That logic is kind of weird. Right now, you look like you are struggling quite a bit.”

Jo Minjoon simply started to smile. It made him feel good that it looked like he was struggling. It showed that his feelings were sincere.

Yes. He needed to accept it. Jo Minjoon liked Kaya. As a chef, as a role model, as a woman. At first, even he wasn’t sure whether his feelings were simply as a fan. However, now he was certain. Even if it was feelings he was having as a fan, if it was this hot, then it already

“You are right.”

“That you are having a hard time?”

“My heart. You are right about my feelings.”

“I know even if you didn’t say that.”

Lisa smiled lightly for the first time. However, Ella could not do that. After chewing a piece of meat with a sorrowful expression on her face, she quickly pushed her plate away and put her head down on the table. This seemed to be Ella's way of showing her disdain.

To see her daughter suffer like this when she was so young. Lisa let out a quiet sigh before lifting Ella into her arms.

"Don't be impatient and just trust her. I don't know why she hasn't been contacting you, but she might find it more appealing for you to trust her rather than to console her. Of course, take my advice with a grain of salt, since I don't know her as well as you do."

"I will."

Jo Minjoon lifted up his smartphone. He slowly put his whole heart into each and every word he typed. He then closed his phone. Jo Minjoon was smiling as he looked at Lisa.

"Thank you for your advice."

"Can I ask what you wrote?"

"No. You can't."

Jo Minjoon pointed at Ella, before speaking quietly in a mischievous tone.

"It's not appropriate for children under 7 years old."

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"What should we do?"

The agent was looking at Kaya with a stiff expression. Kaya silently looked at her reflection in the mirror. At one point in her life, she thought it was a pretty face, but now, it was just annoying.

'Are traces of him.....remaining in this face?'

"Miss Kaya?"

".....Please send him back. I have no desire whatsoever to meet

with him.”

“Are you sure? This would be the second time.”

“Then I will say it again for the second time. My father passed away a long time ago. Please tell that imposter to get lost!”

“.....I understand.”

The agent left the kitchen with a grim expression. Kaya bit her lip. She thought she could push back the problem by avoiding the calls, but her birth father even showed up to her signing events. Twice.

Her phone made a noise. After looking at the screen, she started to smile happily. A name she was familiar with, was saying warm words to her as usual.

[Jo Minjoon: I may not believe in Santa Claus, but I believe that you will overcome it.]

Kaya held her phone at her chest and leaned her back into the chair. Maybe it was because she was tired, but her eyes, that were slightly closed, started to shake.

“Yes.....I will overcome it.”

Chapter 165: The Friendly Judge (1)

So, in this container we have emulsifiers and nitric oxide. If you put strawberry juice into this container like this, see what happens? You get this strawberry foam.

“.....Hmm, if you put the foam sauce on top of it, wouldn't it dissipate the taste and make it harder to feel it?”

Jo Minjoon, who had been watching a video on his smartphone for a long time, asked with a confused voice. He was watching a popular broadcast on molecular gastronomy. He agreed that the majority of cooking done with molecular gastronomy was fresh and boasted a stylish eating experience and taste, but he wasn't too sure about this foam sauce.

Of course epicureans may be able to taste the slight flavor it brings out, but it would be difficult for the average customers to notice. Jo Minjoon looked towards Anderson.

“Are you interested in molecular gastronomy?”

“Why are you randomly bringing that up?”

“Because I don't know much about it. That's why I'm curious yet reluctant to learn it.

“It's not like we will be doing it for a while. Molecular gastronomy only became popular in restaurants once teacher Rachel retired.”

If you were being specific, cotton candy fell under a type of molecular gastronomy as well, but as Anderson mentioned, restaurants only started to deal with molecular gastronomy after Rachel retired. Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders.

“You never know. She might have been researching molecular gastronomy for the last 10 years.”

“Do you think she really needed to do that? She became one of

the best in the world with just traditional dishes.”

Jo Minjoon silently shrugged his shoulders. Anderson changed topics.

“How do you think the audition will be?”

“What do you mean by how will it be?”

“Do you think there will be a lot of people? Applicants.”

“I’m not sure. Minimally, there will at least be more people than the people who were camping outside the restaurant in my opinion.”

He was feeling weird. It was just a few months ago that he was in the position of being judged by the judges, but now he was the judge grading someone’s skills and potential.

“Does this mean we have succeeded in a way?”

“Success is for those who have their names in the Michelin Guide, as well as people who have homes in Beverly Hills or Hollywood. All we’ve done is barely get the title of demi chef.”

“But at least we got rid of the training wheels.”

“That is true.”

Anderson smiled for the first time in a long time. It was at that moment that Rachel appeared in front of the kitchen door and motioned to them before disappearing. Anderson and Jo Minjoon looked at each other before heading out into the hall. Rachel was not the only one in the hall; Isaac, Lisa, and Ella were also there.

“The auditions start tomorrow. Isaac, can you explain the details to them?”

“Of course. There are forty-nine total applicants. Out of them, fifteen have applied to be prep cooks, and twenty-seven for demi chefs. The remaining applicants have applied as apprentices. Nine of them have applied for the baking division, and we will be picking two of them to be Lisa’s assistant. We will be picking two

more demi chefs and four prep cooks. Finally, we will be picking just one apprentice.”

“.....Teacher, can I ask you a question?”

“Of course, go ahead.”

“How should we set the evaluation criteria?”

Rachel calmly answered.

“Do it however you please.”

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“.....Is it really okay to do it as we please?”

The day of the audition. He started to mumble while looking at the line of people outside of the restaurant. Even from far away, you could clearly see the anxiety and anticipation written all over their faces. He was going to be determining their fate, but to set the criteria as he pleased...

However, Anderson did not seem to be burdened at all. With his usually cool and even a bit cold expression, he looked out to the applicants.

“Our standards are going to be the same standards for the majority of other chefs. There’s no reason to be so tense. You seem more tense now than back during Grand Chef.”

“.....I guess so. But the situation calls for it. Back then, my decision only impacted my life, but now, it can impact someone else’s life.”

“Don’t hesitate. If they cannot impress us, that means that’s all they have. Whether it is talent or hard work, if they have even one of the two, they’ll be able to catch our attention.”

Jo Minjoon just continued to look out the window rather than responding. He could see the applicants’ families or friends cheering them on from the side. However, the majority of them will have to drink the poisonous wine of rejection today.

Furthermore, he had to be the one to personally hand them this poisonous wine.

Anderson quietly watched Jo Minjoon from the side. Jo Minjoon was surprisingly hard to read. At first glance, his gentle smile made him look innocent and pure, but as you spend time with him, you also realize that he's not one to open up easily. He had no problem stepping into the hearts of others, but it felt like he had a hard time letting people into his own heart.

That was why at one point, even Anderson was confused. He couldn't tell whether Minjoon truly considered him a friend or not. Of course, he didn't have that type of stupid worry now. Anderson could now determine what kind of person Jo Minjoon was.

He had a deep heart and showed a lot of affection, however, when he needed to, he could be stricter than anybody else. He was the same way right now. The gentle light in Jo Minjoon's eyes was slowly starting to fade away. Just a bit later, there was not a trace of that gentleness left on his expression. He had already sorted out his emotions. Anderson spoke in a terrified voice.

“.....You scary dude.”

“Why am I scary?”

“Nothing. Don't worry about it.”

Anderson turned his head away as if he did not want to say why. Jo Minjoon looked in the mirror and fixed the scarf on his chef coat. A white coat with a black scarf. The sous chefs would wear yellow and the prep cooks would wear grey. The apprentice would get a white scarf and Rachel's scarf was red.

The relationship between the color of the scarf and the chef's rank differed for each restaurant. In some restaurants, the head chef wore black scarfs, and in some places, they used the chef's hat, instead of the scarf to determine the rank.

‘The black color is nice to see.’

He had no complaints. Watching Jo Minjoon smiling as he looked in the mirror, Anderson spoke in disbelief.

“Just a moment ago, you were in pain about having to put down someone’s dreams, but now you’re even smiling.”

“It’s not like I can cry. Plus, as much as I am sad, I am also full of expectation.”

“What kind of expectation?”

Jo Minjoon smiled.

“I have to let my tongue go every so often too.”

“Release your tongue later and come to the kitchen first. We need to do a final inspection.”

Lisa interjected with a sleeping Ella on her back. Jo Minjoon followed Lisa with an awkward expression. Inspecting the kitchen was simple. First, check the status of the frying pan, fire, and knives. Next, check the freshness of the ingredients, and then once you make sure the floor is not slippery, that was it.

“No problem here. What about the oven?”

“Everything is fine here too. Oh, could you hold Ella for a second?”

“Ah, yes.”

Lisa showed her back to Jo Minjoon who slowly took Ella from her back. Her instincts must be awake even when she is sleeping, as Ella got comfortable and grabbed onto Minjoon’s neck. Lisa stretched her shoulders before taking Ella and laying her down in the office couch. Feeling disappointed at the warmth that left his embrace, Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“At least Ella is a good girl. It must be boring coming to the restaurant like this but she doesn’t complain.”

“How could she be bored when the Mr. Fairy of her dreams is in front of her? Of course, I’m not saying our Ella is not a good girl. She is a good girl. A wonderful daughter too.”

“.....I think you are a good mom too, Lisa.”

Jo Minjoon said that while looking at Lisa smile while watching Ella. However, his words caused her face to be full of sorrow. She spoke in a self-deprecating voice.

“A good mom wouldn’t make her daughter live without a dad.”

“.....I know someone who grew up in a similar situation to Ella. She also grew up without a dad, living alone with her mom. And she says without any hesitation whatsoever that her mom was a good mom. I’m sure Ella will be the same.”

Lisa looked at Jo Minjoon silently. The moment she was about to respond, they could hear Isaac’s voice.

“The head chef has asked you to come to the hall.”

“I guess we are about to start.”

Hall. Rachel was waiting for them neatly dressed in her chef coat. She smiled gently as she looked at everyone.

“You all look like you’re about to head out to war or something. No need to be that way. Don’t be nervous and just relax. You have no reason to be nervous.”

Jo Minjoon quietly looked at his watch as Rachel spoke. 9:55. Only five minutes were remaining. Rachel slowly started to speak.

“This is an important day for those who are auditioning, but it is also an important day for us. Rose Island’s main store is officially conducting its first course of business. I’m glad that you are all here for this with me.Alright, Isaac.”

“Yes chef.”

“Open Hell’s Kitchen.”

“Let’s begin.”

Isaac nodded with a determined expression and opened the door. They could hear all sorts of noises on the other side of the door, but soon, they all came into the hall with nervous expressions. Jo Minjoon quietly looked them over.

‘Cooking level 5. 4. 4. 5.2? What are they planning to do with that type of skill?’

The cooking level showed their level of skill. There were definitely people like Yamamoto they met in Japan who was a level 7 like Jo Minjoon while being able to bring out a deeper flavor, but that was only the case when someone focuses solely on one field. If their level was this low, it was hard to expect that type of specialty.

Jo Minjoon’s forehead automatically started to frown. He was sure that the people with low cooking skills were probably apprentice applicants, but even for apprentices, he could not believe that these people who probably have never even cooked properly were trying to enter into the kitchen.

Cooking was not something you could only learn in a fancy restaurant. If you put in even a bit of time at home by yourself, your cooking skill would improve. But to not even be level 5, no even level 4.....that was proof that they did not normally put in any effort.

It was not surprisingly for Jo Minjoon’s expression to get cold. This path was something extremely precious to him that he was willing to dedicate his entire life to it, so he did not like that there were people here who had never even shown a bit of sincerity for cooking. Not only that, it was also an insult to the other applicants who were here.

However, even though he was feeling that way, he welcomed the contestants with a different expression. A white man with black curly hair who was standing in the back row, started to speak to the woman next to him with a thick Spanish accent.

“Ehh, Jo was always smiling during the broadcast so I thought he would have more of a gentle feel, but I guess that’s not the case. He has an extremely cold expression. I guess tv and reality are really different.”

The woman who had her long black hair in braids looked sideways with a focused expression. It was so sharp and scary that the man who spoke to her felt chills for a second. However, the voice that soon followed was surprisingly calm and beautiful.

“Maybe he’s trying to put more pressure on us.”

“I definitely feel pressured. Oh, my name is Javier Diego.”

“Janet Pei.”

Janet answered in a calm voice. Javier smiled as he spoke.

“Nice to meet you. I hope we both get selected. Ah, I’m auditioning to be a demi chef. You?”

There would be no answer from Janet. Before she could start talking, Rachel’s voice echoed through the hall.

“First, I want to thank all of you who have gathered here today. To say that you want to be a part of my family, that tells me that you trust in me a lot. Unfortunately, I cannot be together with all of you. One apprentice, two demi chefs, four prep cooks, and two bakers. That is all we will be selecting today. Of the fifty eight of you, forty eight will.....”

Jo Minjoon quickly whispered.

“Forty nine.”

“.....Cough. Forty nine will have to go home empty handed. The rules of the audition are simple. We will first start with the apprentice candidates. The test is prepared in the kitchen. For the other applicants, please wait in the hall. It is fine if you spectate what is going on in the kitchen. It is an open kitchen after all. Alright, let’s go.”

With that, Rachel turned around. Anderson raised his voice.

“Apprentice candidates, please head into the kitchen.”

Seven individuals responded and followed them into the kitchen. The things they were handed inside were simple. A cutting board, garlic, and a knife. Rachel calmly started to speak.

“The first test is simple. Please slice the garlic to be used in an Aglio e Olio. Minjoon, please demonstrate for them.”

“Sure.”

Jo Minjoon grabbed the kitchen knife. The garlic quickly became thinly sliced with every movement of his knife. He did not look to be extremely focused, but every time he lowered his knife, the garlic was cut into thin and even slices that it was hard to see the changes in the garlic’s size with your eyes. Jo Minjoon lifted up a thinly sliced piece of garlic as he spoke.

“The thickness cannot be thicker or thinner than this. Alright, start cutting.”

Immediately after Jo Minjoon finished speaking, the apprentice candidates started their battle with the garlic. There were some who showed decent levels of knife skills, but the majority were all over the place. It made sense. Of the apprentice candidates, there was only one person who had a cooking level higher than 4.

There was no need to talk about those with level 2 cooking skills. Jo Minjoon silently went and stood in front of a young man. Was he multiracial? The young man who had a dark and ashy skin was using his knife to try to slice the garlic as thinly as he could.....but it was not easy to slice garlic. It’d be a different story if they were cutting green onions. Unfortunately, garlic was very small to begin with, and it was difficult to firmly place it on the cutting board. If you hold the knife too tightly and cannot feel the movement of the blade, it would be hard to slice the garlic.

At the same time, it was not considered to be an advanced skill. If

someone is interested in cooking, anybody can get to this level of slicing garlic easily. But that was not the case for this young man. Putting aside the fact that his slices were not the same thickness, the fact that he was holding onto the knife like a steel rod showed that he had no experience cooking in his life.

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and looked behind him. Rachel, Anderson, and even Lisa were watching the young man with a grim expression.

‘.....I guess I have to shoot the gun.’

The decision was quick. Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“Mr. Ben?”

“Yes!”

“Do you like cooking?”

“Yes, yes I do.”

“You’re lying to me.”

“.....Huh?”

Ben looked towards Jo Minjoon with a confused expression. Jo Minjoon took the knife from Ben’s hands and held it like Ben was holding it.

“Do you think it makes sense for someone who likes cooking to hold a knife like this? Do you even cook normally?”

“.....I do not get to cook often. But I do want to cook.”

“There are many people in the world who want to do things. The problem is whether or not they put in the time and effort, and show passion towards what they want to do. To me, it just looks like you came here to fool around, Mr. Ben.”

“That is why I applied to be an apprentice. I did it in order to put in the effort you are talking about. Isn’t the apprentice level focused on learning?”

Maybe he didn't appreciate being told he was here to fool around, but Ben's voice was both challenging and vicious. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh as he shook his head.

"Effort is not something that comes and goes depending on where you are. If you were really sincere about cooking, you would have tried to cook on your own even before coming here. Does it make sense to say you want to be a chef without having cooked?"

"I didn't have time....."

"I hate that phrase the most. No matter what, you must eat at home. One meal, two meals. No matter how busy, you must eat. You must also sleep. There is nobody in the world who is so busy that they cannot even touch the knife once. You'll have time if you slept just one minute less. Of course, I would understand if you were SO busy that you could not even sleep for one minute a night. Are you that busy?"

Ben could not respond. There was no way he was that busy. Jo Minjoon lifted up the garlic Ben had sliced.

"You mentioned that being an apprentice was the stage to learn. Don't you have to first know the alphabet to learn English? Of all the people here, I think you are the only one who doesn't even know the alphabet, Mr. Ben."

The sound of whispers. It looked like he was speaking politely and gently, however, the contents were poignant and critical. Ben bit his lips and lowered his head. Jo Minjoon looked at him with a sharp gaze as he spoke.

"It is hard for me to think that the passion you did not even have in your own kitchen will suddenly appear because you are standing in a restaurant kitchen. There are too many visible stumbling blocks for us to be together."

Ben's hands did not even show any signs of sweat, as if mocking the other apprentice candidates' efforts. Jo Minjoon looked at

Rachel. She nodded her head. The decision was made.”

“Thank you for your time. Please leave.”

Chapter 166: The Friendly Judge (2)

Ben stared at Jo Minjoon with a disgruntled expression before taking off his apron and quickly turning around. As he walked out of the restaurant, anyone could see that his steps were full of anger. Jo Minjoon watched Ben leave with a cold expression. Javier, who watched what Jo Minjoon did, spoke as if he was in disbelief.

“.....I thought he was an angel, but he was actually a ghost.”

“He’s not a ghost. He’s a fairy.”

An irritated voice suddenly interjected. Javier jumped up in surprise and looked around him. However, the only person sitting at his table was Janet. Javier looked towards Janet with a concerned expression.

“He’s like a fairy? Are you one of Minjoon’s fans?”

“What the heck are you talking about?”

“You said it just now. He’s a fairy, not a ghost. You even said it in such an irritated voice.”

“I never said anything like that. What are you talking about?”

Janet looked at Javier like he was crazy. Javier just shut his mouth with a confused expression. He was sure that he heard a voice. As he was thinking about it, a small head popped out from underneath the loose tablecloth.

“.....!”

Javier wanted to scream but held it in as his body started to shake. Ella looked towards the shivering Javier with a smirk on her face.

“My uncle is not a ghost.”

“.....Uhhh, uncle? Are you talking about Minjoon? Wait, more importantly, who are you?”

“My name is Ella.”

Ella smugly responded before going and sitting down next to Janet. As Janet watched her with a nervous expression, Ella just laid down on the table and turned her head to look at Jo Minjoon. Javier tried to talk to her once more.

“Do you know Minjoon?”

“Yes. He’s my uncle.”

“.....Uncle?”

Janet looked at Ella in confusion. No matter how you looked at her, she showed no signs of being Asian. All sorts of complicated family trees went through her mind. However, Javier quickly caught on that it was just being used as a sign of their closeness. Javier looked towards Ella and asked.

“Your uncle must be good to you.”

“Yes. He plays a lot with me, he cooks tasty food when I’m hungry, andhmm.....”

Ella twisted lips as she fell deep into thought. However, there wasn’t a need to listen any further. Javier quietly looked at Jo Minjoon as he thought to himself that if a child could give such positive evaluations of him, he must usually be a pretty gentle person.

‘Then why is he so harsh right now?’

Jo Minjoon’s evaluation was not only harsh to Ben who just left. He had to do it. His eyes kept seeing many people who were not ready. Of course, they applied to be apprentices because they were not ready, but there were only three people who seemed like they had spent a lot of effort practicing on their own.

Jo Minjoon walked in front of a thin Black man and looked at his garlic. All of the garlic slices were cut in even thickness. If he really wanted to find some faults he could, but that would not make a

difference. Jo Minjoon looked towards the man. The man looked at Jo Minjoon and the others with an extremely nervous expression.

“.....Mr. Justin. You said you taught yourself how to cook, yes?”

“Yes...yes!”

Anderson lifted up a slice of garlic to compare before starting to speak.

“Your application said that you were a truck driver. I know truck drivers work for long hours, how did you study?”

“I did what I can to sleep one minute less and cook for even a short amount of time. When I could, the meals I ate on the road were food that I cooked myself.”

It sounded like what Jo Minjoon had told Ben had left quite a deep impression. Jo Minjoon let out a fake cough with an awkward expression as Rachel gently smiled and started to speak.

“A truck driver. I guess it would be fine for you to take the wheel whenever we go grocery shopping.”

“Thank you!”

“Don’t get too excited. That’s only if you end up being selected.”

Jo Minjoon spoke in a cold voice. Justin’s face became disappointed, but it couldn’t be helped. There was one more test left for apprentices. Minjoon was worried that Justin would get extremely excited and be unable to show his true skills in the next test.

‘I can finally understand why Alan had to be so tough on us.’

Knife skills. After Ben, four more people were also eliminated. There were only four applicants remaining. Internally, Jo Minjoon was rooting for Justin. He was the only applicant with a cooking level of 5, and Jo Minjoon wanted skilled people to be a part of their family. You can’t really judge a person’s character in one day,

but based on what he had seen so far, he did not seem to be too bad.

The ingredient for the next test was also garlic. The last test was focused on their precision and skills. This test was focused on how quickly they could peel a container of garlic. As Rachel announced the details of the next test, Jo Minjoon interjected.

“Just so you know, you cannot put it in the container and shake it. The only thing you can use is your knife. Since we are testing how fast your hands are, you cannot take the easy way out.”

There was also a time when Jo Minjoon was an apprentice and stupidly peeled one garlic at a time with his knife. Later, he learned that the garlic peels itself if you put it in a container and shake itbut that was after he had already suffered for about a month.

However, when you want to test someone's hand speed, making them handle ingredients, especially small ingredients like garlic, was a good way to do it.

Anderson blew the whistle loudly. The applicants got surprised and quickly started to use the butt of the knife to hit the garlic and split the pieces. Then, they used the point of the knife to remove the peel one by one.

The results were not as expected. Justin was the third to finish peeling the garlic out of the four people. At first glance, he seemed to be at a disadvantage, but Jo Minjoon calmly took a look at the status of the applicants' garlicks. Then, he made a final decision in his mind.

The judges spent some time to discuss their thoughts. All of their decisions were the same. Rachel finally started to speak.

“At first, we debated sharing the results with you all later, but there is nothing more painful than hopefully waiting. The judges made an unanimous decision. I will not prolong this more than I

need to. It's not like this is a broadcast or anything."

Saying that, Rachel headed in front of Justin, whose lips were shaking with anxiety. Rachel patted Justin on the shoulder and started to smile.

"Welcome. We are now one family."

"Thank you.....THANK YOU!"

Justin's eyes became red as he shouted in a shaking voice. Jo Minjoon looked around at the other three. The slowest peeler had an understanding look that he knew he wouldn't get it, but there was a lot of disappointment in the other two. Jo Minjoon headed towards them and asked.

"Do you know why you were eliminated?"

".....No. I'm not sure."

"Look at this."

Jo Minjoon placed some garlic on the cutting board. It was the garlic that they had peeled, as well as one that Justin had peeled. Jo Minjoon lifted up the garlic as he spoke.

"The difference in your levels, can you feel it?"

They quietly looked at the garlic. Around the time they finally realized the difference and let out an 'Ah,' Anderson started to chime in from the side.

"Just because we asked you to do it quickly, doesn't mean you can half-ass it. I'm sure you were all nervous. It made you focus on the time and made your hand move faster. However, under no circumstances can you let an ingredient go bad. Ingredients are the foundation of any cooking, and the apprentice will be in charge of that foundation."

Justin's garlic was clean without a single cut on the garlic. However, the others' garlic did not look the same. Their garlic were cut on the side by the blade or had pain marks remaining, and

because of that, the sap spilled out and made the garlic sticky as well. Jo Minjoon spoke in a soft voice.

“I understand that you were feeling rushed. However, there is only one reason for a chef to rush. A customer. When a customer is waiting. However, you still cannot use damaged ingredients just because a customer is waiting. If you keep that in mind, I am confident you will be able to be selected at any restaurant in the future.”

Although he did not have any real experience working as a chef, his words still held some weight. The reason was simple. Every time Jo Minjoon cooked, he thought about the people who will be eating it. His heart came across with each and every one of his words.

One of the eliminated applicants came up to Jo Minjoon. She was a white woman who seemed to be a bit younger than Jo Minjoon. She was looking up at him with sparkling eyes.

“Thank you for saying such kind words. It must be kind of funny for me to say this, but I started to dream of becoming a chef after watching you cook. You were the one who showed me how fancy cooking can be and how stylish it can be. Today, I feel like I learned something else from you. A chef’s heart. I will make sure to remember that.”

“.....Thank you for looking at me in such good light. Let’s work hard together. For both of us, we still have a long way to go.”

The woman smiled with a disappointed expression before slowly turning around and starting to walk. Rachel watched the leaving applicants and started to speak.

“Do not let this bring you down. There is no failure in challenge unless you give up.”

She said this to cheer them up, but the person that this impacted the most was actually Anderson. There is no failure until you give

up. There were many times when the world continued to focus on Minjoon that he thought Jo Minjoon was a wall he could not climb over.

‘You don’t loseuntil you give up.’

€

They had decided on an apprentice. Next in line was obvious the prep cooks. Of the fifteen applicants, four of them will end up a part of their family. Maybe it was because they were at the level to apply for prep cooks, but the majority of them had decent skills. Only one of them had a cooking level of 4, nine of them had a cooking level of 5, and the remaining five had a cooking level of 6.

‘It seems too much for a level 4 to apply to be a prep cook.’

The person seemed to be around thirty years in age, and Minjoon thought he might have worked at restaurants based on his experience rather than his skill. Jo Minjoon started to focus on the people with a cooking level of 6. There was nothing else he could do. Unlike the point system for dishes, he knew first hand the difference in cooking levels from coming up the levels himself.

There was even a difference between people who were at the bottleneck of level 5, and people who just broke into level 6. Of course, if you reached the bottleneck, you could level up with the slightest of insight, but you could never tell when that insight would happen.

Rachel started to speak.

“There is a simple reason as to why we are selecting four prep cooks. Minjoon and Anderson, as well as the two new demi chefs we are selecting today. We want each of them to have an assistant. What we are going to ask of you today is not creativity. What we are expecting from you is quite simple. You need to be able to complete dishes you are asked to make by following a recipe without making any mistakes. But before we start.....”

Rachel had a mischievous smile on her face as she asked.

“I want to ask you a question. If you are selected and end up following one of the demi chefs, who do you want to work with? Since we haven’t selected the other two demi chefs, I guess right now you can only pick between Minjoon and Anderson.”

She made it sound like it was a joke to lighten the atmosphere, but Jo Minjoon and Anderson both had sharp glares in their eyes. Men had a tendency to get fired up about such childish things; Jo Minjoon and Anderson were no different.

Anderson looked at Rachel with a fierce gaze.

“Teacher. Before they decide, can I make a campaign speech?”

“Of course. Go ahead.”

“Ahem.....”

Anderson let out a fake cough before stepping in front of the crowd. Jo Minjoon sent him a look as if asking if he really had to do this. It made him question his decision for a second, but something made him want to win. Anderson started to speak in the friendliest voice he could muster, although it only came out sounding very awkward.

“I have a very stiff personality. However, this also means that I will not micromanage you. I will only step in when I see the need to do so to make sure everything is okay. Plus.....”

Anderson spoke with a meaningful smile.

“I will promise you this. If you pick me and end up being selected, I will personally cook a fine dining dinner for you.”

The applicants let out some cheers and ‘ooooooooos.’ No matter what, he was the runner-up in the Grand Chef competition. Plus, to be able to eat fine dining cooked by Anderson, who had been receiving elite cooking education at ‘Glouto’ since he was young was like a dream come true. They were both curious and full of

anticipation. At that moment, Jo Minjoon glared at Anderson before stepping forward and starting to speak.

“Since Anderson has come forward with such a commitment, I guess I have no other choice. I will also treat you to fine dining. And honestly speaking.....”

Jo Minjoon started to smirk as he looked at Anderson.

“How can you tell anything by trying it once? You need to try it at least twice to compare and dissect it. I will treat you twice.”

“.....I agree. Then I will treat you three times.”

“Four times.”

“Five times.”

The two sharply glared at each other. Javier, who had been watching the kitchen from the hall, smiled as he started to speak.

“Men end up becoming children whenever there is a competition.”

“What?! Then my uncle will get younger?”

Ella took in a deep breath and her eyes opened wide in surprise. At such an attack that came from nowhere, Javier did not know how he should respond. Janet answered on his behalf.

“He may even end up younger than you.”

“Umm.....is it also possible for women to get younger?”

“I’m not sure. I guess they might, depending on the person.”

Janet answered in a calm voice. Ella had a refreshed expression as if she was saying that she finally answered one of her lifelong questions, but started to mumble with a complicated expression.

“I think my mommy became younger too.”

“Why do you think that?”

Ella kept her mouth shut and did not answer. She could not

answer. She wanted her mommy to maintain her pride. Ella sucked in her cheeks as she thought to herself.

‘That must be why mommy uses strawberry flavored toothpaste.’

Chapter 167: The Friendly Judge (3)

“Oh, it looks like the two of them are going to cook.”

“.....I’m right here watching too.”

Janet responded in a sassy voice. Kitchen. Was it to demonstrate? Jo Minjoon and Anderson stood in front of the countertop. Jo Minjoon spoke in a low and clear voice.

“There are only two dishes you will be making. Tomato spaghetti with shrimp and scallops, and salmon steak with velouté sauce on top of fried radish. Here are the recipes.”

“Minjoon and I will now show you how to cook both the pasta and steak. If you can’t get a feel for it with the recipe alone, figure it out by watching us cook. Then.....we will begin.”

Before the applicants could ready their minds, they started to cook. Anderson was cooking the tomato spaghetti and Jo Minjoon was cooking the salmon steak.

Neither was a really complicated dish. However, that definitely did not mean that they were easy dishes to make. What people tend to misunderstand often is that they think a simple recipe meant the difficulty was lower. But that was not the case.

There are people who would fail at grilling salted fish. Many would either burn the skin or have trouble with controlling the flame that the fish would stick to the pot. That doesn’t pertain to only the beginners. Chefs. Even well-known chefs could easily burn fish if they lost their focus.

Tomato spaghetti was similar. For the pastas that use a tomato sauce as the base, the majority face challenges while making the tomato sauce. The reason was simple. It was hard to bring out the flavor of the tomato sauce.

When you are stir-frying chopped tomatoes on top of the flame, the hardest part is determining how cooked the tomato is. Crushed

tomato tend to be surrounded in water, so it is hard to determine it visually, so you have to rely on your tongue. But that wasn't easy either. To continue to smell the fragrance of the tomato with your nose and then accurately determine the taste with your tongue was not easy.

Of course, intuition developed from years of experience, as well as cooking with accurate timing could be used as well. However, the keyword there is years of experience or being a genius with absolute taste like Kaya. That was why the smartest method the applicants could choose right now was figuring out the amount of time needed to cook the sauce.

‘Yes, that’s how applicants should be.’

Jo Minjoon had a sharp gaze in his eyes. The recipes were both 8 point dishes. Rachel’s recipes were simple. Start with a vegetable broth then pour thyme, fresh cream, and lemon zest to make the velouté sauce. Then, you put the radish that was coated in cornstarch and fried on top of the sauce. On top of that, you put the salmon that was marinated with lemon salt and pepper, grilled on a frying pan, and then flambéd with white wine.

It was a great recipe to test someone’s foundation. Although they may be used to frying things, it was normal to be nervous when frying an ingredient you’re not used to handling. Radish was such an ingredient. Grilling salmon should be more familiar in comparison, but that didn’t matter. They were also looking to see how well you could cook something you were used to in such a tense situation like this one.

Jo Minjoon first prepped the ingredients. He started with the vegetable broth. Jo Minjoon put the pot on top of the flame and lifted up his knife. Jo Minjoon did not hesitate for even a moment. The vegetables on top of the cutting board started to get chopped up into pieces the size of a baby’s hand.

After putting the vegetable broth ingredients on the flame, it was

immediately time for the velouté sauce. Jo Minjoon melted the butter and flour to make a roux. It wasn't that hard until this point. The problem was adding the ingredients like the vegetable broth and letting it reduce without burning. That was the hard part. If you did not stir it diligently, it would burn easily.

That is why even if you were to start working on other tasks, your attention had to still remain on the velouté sauce. That was the difficult part of this test. Of course when they were serving customers, the velouté sauce would already be prepared, but in this instant, they had to personally do everything from one to ten. It was natural for your attention to get diverted and for the quality of your dish to fall.

If it was anybody else, that would be the case.

However, Jo Minjoon did not falter. He cut the radish and coated it in starch, fried it, and then ground the lemon peel with salt to make lemon salt. Jo Minjoon wasn't nervous even as he poured olive oil on the frying pan and placed the salmon on top of it. His presence in the kitchen made it feel like there were at least two people working in the kitchen.

"I thought his cooking was extravagant on Grand Chef because it was a broadcast.....but is that really someone with no experience in the professional kitchen?"

".....I finally understand what a genius is."

"Anderson at least had experience working at his parents' restaurant, but"

The applicants were looking at Jo Minjoon and whispering in astonishment. He looked so perfect that it made them even feel a bit depressed about their own abilities. But that was obvious. Every time Jo Minjoon survived one of the Grand Chef missions, he had put his soul onto the countertop.

The situation there was clearly different than in a kitchen. They

had limited time, and often an unfamiliar topic. It was not only once or twice that he had to show concentration levels reaching the limits of human potential. Jo Minjoon most definitely did not forget any of the lessons he learned from that type of experience. He stood in front of that countertop many times to remember the feelings that he had, even while losing time to sleep.

That is what made him the person he is today. That is what made him the person he is right now. After all that, it was obvious that there would not be any faults in Jo Minjoon's cooking. Among the applicants, an Asian teenager with shaved black hair took turns watching Minjoon's hands and eyes before swallowing his spit.

‘As I expected he's so cool.’

The young man named Gerrick, was watching Jo Minjoon with envious eyes. There were many times he thought about giving up on becoming a chef, but it was then that he learned about Jo Minjoon. The beginner cook who stood proud and became prominent on Grand Chef among the nation's best amateur cooks. Also the owner of absolute taste.

Other than the fact that they were both Asian, there was too much difference in their abilities to say he felt a lot of similarities with Minjoon. But it wasn't his skills that made Gerrick think Minjoon was cool. Attitude. It was his attitude. His expression and the movement of the tips of his fingers each and every moment he was treating his ingredients.....and his heart that he poured onto his dishes. Love, or maybe commitment. All of that reached over to him across the tv screen that he could clearly feel it, so we don't need to even talk about how he was feeling standing in front of Minjoon right now.

Gerrick was not the only one feeling that way among the applicants. It was not only Minjoon who was like that; Anderson's attitude was the same. They were sure the food the two of them were making were the dishes the applicants will be preparing, but there was a power of will going on between them as if they were in

a battle.

Cooking. If you think about it, it is a job with an extremely wide range of topics. That also means that it is a job that makes it difficult to concentrate. Even chefs often say something like this: I've been cooking my whole life, but I still don't know what cooking is. They were not saying it to be modest; they really didn't know.

Some people may say that using a knife, lighting a fire and sprinkling seasoning is cooking, but that was an answer no chef would be satisfied with. What they had been chasing after their whole life was not how to use a knife, how to properly use a flame, or even how to handle seasonings. They were chasing after cooking as a whole. The subtle difference that makes.....that would come from the fundamental mindset you have about cooking.

They could see that Jo Minjoon and Anderson were full of conviction. They were certain about the job they were doing and the path they were walking. They knew about cooking. They had to. Otherwise, they couldn't show such loving expressions as they cooked. You can't love something you don't know.

'My supposed disciples.....are actually the ones teaching me.'

Rachel smiled gently while watching them from a distance. The path that she had forgotten, she felt like she could slowly start to remember while watching the two of them.

The cooking was finished. Jo Minjoon looked at his dish with a satisfied expression on his face.

In the middle of the velouté sauce that enveloped the plate like a lake, the fried radish sat on top of it like an island. And the salmon steak placed on top of that was glistening pink with a crispy skin. The point was 8 points. That meant he did not make any mistakes.

Anderson also finished without making any mistakes. The scallops surrounded the edge of the plate like flower petals and in

the middle of it was spaghetti that was rolled into a circle with a shrimp looking like it was twisting around on top of the spaghetti. Anderson started to speak.

“What do you think? Were you able to get a feel for it?”

“Yes, we got it.”

“You can’t have gotten a feel for it just yet.”

After one of the applicants answered, Jo Minjoon quickly interjected. He hit the plate of salmon steak with a fork as he continued.

“The core is always in the taste. Each and every one of the movements I made while cooking, no matter how tiny it may have been, it is currently contained in this dish. So you have to taste it.”

Jo Minjoon started to cut the radish and salmon into small pieces. It was not enough for fifteen people to eat, but it didn’t matter since they were just going to get a taste. Anderson’s dish was the same. With his dish, all they had to do was taste the sauce. Other than the recipe, the only thing they needed to know was how long they needed to cook the tomatoes in the sauce to make it perfect.

Gerrick placed Minjoon’s salmon in his mouth with an excited expression. The size was no bigger than his thumb even with the radish and salmon combined. But it was the moment his teeth pierced through the crispy coating and crushed the moist texture of the radish. The sweet and smooth taste of the velouté sauce sprinkled with lemon zest traveled from his tongue to fill his mouth, and the piece of salmon on his tongue was so soft and melted in his mouth almost as if it was ice cream made with drugs (TL: ... that’s... an interesting comparison)

“Oh.....!”

They could hear moans starting to come out from everywhere. The taste was so fabulous that it made them forget about their

tension and nervousness. They looked at Minjoon with surprise. Honestly speaking, there were some people there who thought the only reason Jo Minjoon was given a demi chef position was because of the broadcast and the positive brand image he developed for having absolute taste.

But they could no longer feel that way after tasting his food. There was not a single person who could confidently say that their skills were better than Jo Minjoon's. They felt that he definitely had the qualifications for them to work as his assistant.

It was the same for Anderson's tomato spaghetti. Each time they chewed on the noodle, the taste felt like it was warming their body and made them wonder if a tomato was an ingredient that had such a clear sweet taste.

‘Am I really going to make this?’

Once he became conscious of that fact, his heart started to beat wildly. Gerrick clenched his fist. Could I do it? He wanted to do it and even got a greedy desire to successfully make it no matter what. Then he wanted to stand behind Jo Minjoon. He wanted to be Minjoon's assistant. Of course, the largest jewel of this restaurant was Rachel, but he wanted to follow after the footsteps that were right in front of him. (TL: I wonder what Gerrick's cooking level is, and really? The two asians are working together? I hope if Gerrick gets picked he works with Anderson to throw a curveball.)

As the fifteen of them stood in front of the countertop, the feeling coming out was different. Did she say there were twenty-five people in the kitchen in the past? Jo Minjoon walked back and forth watching all of them cook.

The first dish was Anderson's pasta. As expected, all of them were struggling while making the tomato sauce. Jo Minjoon looked at the people who seemed to be cooking pretty steadily. The people who you could tell were doing well were of course people with

level 6 cooking levels.

However, it wasn't a walk in the park for them either. That had to be the case since the expected cooking score was 8 points. Not everyone could use that recipe to make a 8 point dish.

‘.....Now that I think about it, since when did I find it so easy to make level 8 dishes?’

Of course it was difficult to create a recipe. But recreating it was easy. Even in most restaurants, the people actually making the 9 point and 10 point dishes were demi chefs and prep cooks with cooking levels of 6 or 7.....but it was only possible because they repeated making the same dish over and over to the point their hands moved like the head chef's.

He now knew that a dish with more points wasn't necessarily the better dish, but there were no easy dishes that could get a lot of points. It had to go through all sorts of complicated procedures and you needed to meticulously focus to get more points. Even this spaghetti that Anderson made, it looks simple but everything, including the sauce, was made from scratch.

He felt that he improved really quickly over the past few months. It was only a bit more than half a year, but there was a lot that he learned and ingrained in his body.

They were done making the spaghetti. As the applicants immediately started to focus on the salmon steak without rest, Jo Minjoon quietly looked at all of the spaghettis. And then he saw it. Just one dish. Only one dish came in at 8 points.

‘.....Gerrick.’

How much must he have focused while cooking that dish? Jo Minjoon put Gerrick's spaghetti in his mouth.

Then he nodded his head while whispering to Anderson.

“Hey, this one tastes pretty similar to yours.”

“.....The one I made is a bit tastier.”

“Do you really need to focus on your pride even now?”

“Hmph, if your pride falters depending on the situation, can it really be called pride?”

“I guess you’re right. I accept your reasoning.”

As they were finishing grading all fifteen plates of spaghetti, the prep cook applicants were starting to grill the salmon on the pan. Jo Minjoon frowned while looking at one of the applicants. Maybe it was because he was nervous, but the fire surrounding the frying pan was too strong.

Even though he should leave them alone for the test, he couldn’t let the salmon suffer like that. Jo Minjoon headed over to Rachel and pointed at the applicant.

“Should I leave that alone?”

“Take some points away and tell him. If he continues like that, only the salmon will suffer.”

After getting Rachel’s permission, Jo Minjoon nodded with a happy expression. As chefs, they could not accept ingredients being wasted in terrible form. Jo Minjoon headed in front of that applicant and started to speak.

“What are you thoughts about wasting ingredients?”

“It’s something all chefs must look to avoid. The first pillar of a kitchen is the customer’s satisfaction, and the second is financial well-being.”

“Then what are you doing right now? Can’t you hear the salmon screaming?”

The applicant was surprised at Minjoon’s words and quickly flipped the salmon. That was not the end. Jo Minjoon continued to walk around the applicants taking points away. It was very different than Anderson who was standing on the side with his

arms crossed.

“We said to make a velouté sauce, not a lava sauce. Turn down your flame.”

“You must like melo movies. The salmon and the frying pan are stuck together more than most couples.”

“I thought we asked you to flambé, when did we ask you to make a wine reduction?”

As he walked around like that, they could see the applicants get nervous whenever Minjoon walked by and swallowing their spit. Rachel looked at Minjoon as if it was unexpected. She thought he would be soft and have a hard time saying difficult things to people, but he was unexpectedly harsh.

That was actually the role she expected from Anderson. As this was not something she expected, Rachel spoke to Anderson in a somewhat nervous voice.

“I’m surprised Minjoon actually has some charisma. I thought he would be a softie.”

Anderson shrugged his shoulder as he answered.

“He is tinkerbelle raised in the wild.”

Chapter 168: The Friendly Judge (4)

The reason Jo Minjoon was critiquing each individual dish like this wasn't only because he didn't want to see ingredients go to waste. It was also for the applicants' benefit. If they were going to lose points anyways, it would be better to get it now and serve a proper dish rather than later after making a failure.

Also, if this could help them see what kind of mistakes they were showing, they could even fix it for the future, which meant it was like they were being mentored at the same time.

In the end, Jo Minjoon walked around the countertop until all of them finished cooking. This made it possible to predict how he would be as the demi chef, no not just as a demi chef but also as a sous chef or head chef in the future.

Javier started to mumble.

"I'm glad I'm a demi chef. If I had to work with him as a prep cook, my ears would fall off."

"To be specific, you are not a demi chef but a demi chef applicant."

"It doesn't matter since I will be picked anyways. Do you plan to remain an applicant Janet?"

"I am just speaking about the prese....."

"Are you fighting right now?"

Ella looked at them with a stern expression. Janet stopped talking and let out a sigh. Ella opened the pink leather children's backpack she had on her back and took out a small bag and pushed it to the two of them.

"Eat this and stop fighting."

".....What is this?"

"It's jelly that my uncle made. Don't eat the yellow one. That one

is my favorite.”

Food that Jo Minjoon made. It might just be jelly, but that was still considered food. Javier’s eyes started to sparkle. He took out a jelly with great anticipation and put it in his mouth. The one he picked up was a clear jelly.

“Apple flavor. Oh the fact that it is not too chewy should mean that he didn’t use gelatin.”

As Javier was giving a verdict, Janet slyly reached her hand out. Soon after, Ella started to tear up.

“I told you not the yellow one!”

Janet didn’t seem to care and put the jelly in her mouth with a calm expression. It was as Javier said. Maybe it was because he was thinking about a child’s teeth, but you could tell the amount of care he put into it based on the fact that it was soft and sweet rather than chewy.

“It’s tasty.”

“.....She says it’s tasty. After stealing someone else’s!”

“You gave it to us.”

“The lemon flavor ones are mine.”

Ella clenched her fists tightly and her body started to shake. Janet put on a smile so small you couldn’t see it unless you focused really hard, and spoke to Ella.

“I’ll make it for you. One that tastes even better. I’m good at making jelly.”

Ella seemed to be lured for a second, but she quickly started to speak in a voice full of tantrum.

“It’s not like you’re going to come back if you fail. Even I know that. I’m an adult too you know?”

“An adult?”

“I am an adult. I can even wash my doll’s hair on my own now.”

Ella opened her shoulders wide as if she was showing off. Watching that, even Janet could not maintain her cold demeanor. In fact, she was even debating whether to reach out and rub Ella’s head. At that moment, Javier opened his mouth.

“Oh, the judging is starting.”

Hearing that, Janet turned her head. Rachel was standing in front and started to speak slowly.

“This time it was a little more difficult. Minjoon did help you, but thinking about the fact that this was all of your first time attempting this dish, I believe you all did a very good job. So it is a bit disappointing that we can only bring four of you onto our team.”

Jo Minjoon just silently looked at the half empty dishes. The biggest thought in his head was just one thing.

‘..... Do we have to throw all of that away.’

When he was young, his parents were quite strict. They were the type to tell him to scrape it up and eat it if there was even one kernel of rice left in his bowl, and they did not look kindly to leaving food on the plate or being picky. Remember the sweat of the farmers who let us have this rice. It was a cliché statement, but even so, it remained on his mind.

Things were different now and he was more likely to hurt his body by overeating when he was already full and would probably say just throw it away, buthe actually ended up caring more about the importance of the ingredients than his parents. It felt like each of the ingredients were whispering to him. ‘Are you really going to throw us away? Even though we grew up nicely like this?’

“Minjoon?”

“.....yes, yes?”

Jo Minjoon turned around in surprise after suddenly hearing Rachel's voice in his ear. Anderson flicked his tongue tsk, tsk, and then started to speak.

“She asked you a question. Do you have anything you want to say to the applicants.”

“Ah.....”

Jo Minjoon let out a noise as he looked towards the applicants. There were different types of gazes coming at him from the group. Because he was nagging at them the whole time they were cooking, there were some people who were looking at him with an uncomfortable gaze while a certain someone had been looking at him with a look of gratitude since the beginning. (TL: Sighs... really? Must we?)

The gazes were better than when they first stepped into Rose Island though. There was no way that couldn't happen. They saw it with their own eyes. The value that the name Jo Minjoon had was not packaged and exaggerated. They saw that he was a 'real' chef.

Even if they didn't want to accept it, they couldn't help but accept it. Even those who thought he wasn't much because he had no experience could no longer take him lightly. With the attention on him, Jo Minjoon debated what to say before speaking.

“Somehow I ended up nagging you a lot. I feel like I may have also raised my voice, so if anybody felt uncomfortable, I want to say I'm sorry.”

He didn't get any response. He continued to speak calmly.

“Four of you will end up a part of my family while the rest of you won't. However, even if the restaurant we are working in is not the same, since I believe you will all be working in a kitchen, I believe that in the large scope of things, we are all on the same boat. Let's all enjoy this trip together.”

Two or three people started to clap quietly before stopping. Rachel started to speak.

“I will announce the selected individuals.”

€

“.....It’s finally our turn.”

Both the apprentice and the prep cooks were selected. The bakers were having their own test with Lisa by the oven. It was now time for the Demi chefs to be tested. Javier looked towards Janet and started to speak.

“What do you think the topic will be?”

“I don’t really care. No matter what it is, I will be selected.”

“.....Now I am envious of that confidence.”

If Javier had seen Janet’s hand, if he had seen those slightly shaking hands, he would not have said something like that. However, Javier did not see them. But Ella did. Ella let out a grunt as she swung her legs that were dangling and jumped off the chair. She then headed to Janet and stuck out her pinky.

“Will you really make me some lemon jelly?”

“.....huh?”

“You said it earlier. You said you were going to make me lemon jelly. Although it probably wouldn’t taste as good as my uncle’s.”

Janet just quietly looked at Ella after listening to her sassy voice. Ella kept her eye open widely to look at Janet, as if she was trying to have a staring contest with her. Janet also stuck out her pinky.

“I will make it for you. One that is even tastier.”

Her hands were no longer shaking. Janet let go of the finger and started to walk. It was quite a scene to watch twenty seven applicants get up at once. Rachel stood in front of them as she spoke.

“Due to the size of the kitchen, I think it will be difficult for all of you to be testing together. The 14 of you here, please come in to the kitchen. The rest of you, please wait in the office. You can’t find out the topic for the mission until right before you start cooking.

Rachel pointed to the middle of the group as she spoke. It was right between Javier and Janet. Watching Javier’s back as he headed into the kitchen, Janet followed Isaac’s lead into the office.

‘.....I should have stood one more step over.’

She just felt like it would be less nerve-wracking to finish first. Of course, the people who are cooking now will also have to wait while she was cooking but at least they could sense their result to some degree.

Janet sat down on the couch located in one of the corners and leaned back. Her heart was thumping. Of course it was. Rachel Rose. That name held a lot of meaning in Janet’s life. When she could not find a reason for living another day, that name was what gave her hope.

The reason for it wasn’t actually that big of an issue. Rather, it was pretty obvious and also somewhat childish. Rachel Rose was someone who proved that you could stand on top of the world as a woman. Kitchen. In the small ‘country’ that is full of dangerous things like knives and fire, she was a chef who was able to push forward past the rough guys with a woman’s body.

Honestly speaking, when she first had the dream of becoming a chef, she was not really interested in the name of Rachel Rose. There were many chefs in the world, and it didn’t seem right to be her fan just because there were not many female chefs.

However, as she started experiencing the kitchen, her thoughts changed. The work was harder than she had expected it would be, and a woman’s stamina was weaker than what she had believed. If she looked like she was showing even the slightest sign of fatigue, the chefs in the kitchen would start to talk: ‘Are you acting like a

girl again?’ Janet hated that statement so much that she clenched her teeth and pushed forward. When she felt like she was going to die, she told herself that ‘if I’m going to die, let’s die’ as she lifted packages and prepped ingredients.

So every time she felt completely terrible and felt like she couldn’t do it anymore, she thought to herself, ‘how would Rachel have persevered past this?’ Of course, she had no way of finding out, but she was sure about one thing. Rachel managed to persevere. So she needed to persevere as well. She couldn’t use the fact that there were many microaggressions against female chefs as an excuse. No matter how bad it got, it probably wasn’t as bad as what Rachel had to go through.

She worked like that in the same restaurant until she got promoted to demi chef. Since she was so good that everybody in the kitchen was saying that she was going to be the next sous chef, the results of her perseverance was very sweet.

But there was really a simple reason that she submitted her resignation and came here. When she heard that Rachel was looking for her new family, her body felt so itchy that she could not handle it. She wanted to be a part of Rachel’s family as she wrote a new chapter in history. That was why.

‘.....So that is Minjoon.’

Janet thought about the jelly she had just eaten. It was decent. Just by looking at the jelly, she could tell the level of his foundation. The way he cooked in front of the prep cook applicants also looked very seasoned and spotless.

‘However, the spot of her favorite disciple is going to be mine.’

She was able to persevere in her cooking career thanks to the push she got from Rachel. Rachel was already Janet’s teacher in her heart. That is why she wanted to be accepted by her. ‘You grew up to be a great chef. It’s amazing.’ She wanted to hear that from Rachel.

That is why Janet's expression was quiet fierce when she got in the kitchen an hour later. Jo Minjoon took a peek at Janet. As Janet did not avoid his gaze and continued to stare at him, he freaked out and whispered to Anderson.

"That girl keeps staring at me."

".....Fix that prince disease of yours. (TL: How Koreans phrase narcissism?) Otherwise, I'm going to tell Kaya."

"No, it's not like that she keeps staring at me. Did I do something wrong?"

"How should I know when you don't even know?"

Anderson answered in a sassy voice. However, Jo Minjoon could not help but continue to peek at that woman from time to time. The fact that she was giving him a fierce expression like she was trying to challenge him wasn't the only reason.

'Cooking level 8.'

She was the only applicant today with a cooking level of 8. That meant that if she was able to show her true abilities, there was a very high chance that they will be working together."

Looking past that, he could not help but be amazed. Jo Minjoon knew what having a cooking level of 8 meant. The lady did not look any older than 30 on the high end. Of course, Anderson and Kaya also had cooking levels of 8, but there was Anderson who received elite cooking lessons since he was young from his famous chef parents, and Kaya, whose natural talents could easily topple the level of a genius. These two could not serve as comparison to your average people.

"I will first announce the topic of your mission. Signature dish. Oh, seeing that none of you are surprised, I guess everybody expected it."

It was understandable. Demi chef was the level that you started to be called a chef. To be a chef meant that your individual flair, as

well as cooking philosophy has been developed to a certain level. Of course, it is not completed, but you needed to have enough vision and knowledge to discuss a recipe with the sous chef or head chef.

That is why many restaurants often ask for a chef's signature dish when they are looking for a new demi chef. They wanted to see a dish full of a person's individuality. Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“If it is an ingredient in our storage room, you can use anything.”

It was the moment Jo Minjoon said that. Isaac, who was standing in the hall, was sending some type of hand signal to Rachel. After looking at Isaac doing that for a while, Rachel had a moment of realization as she went ‘Ah.’ And whispered in Minjoon's ear. Jo Minjoon made an awkward expression before he let out a fake cough and continued.

“.....Hmm hmm, apparently anything except caviar and foie gras.’

Chapter 169: The Friendly Judge (5)

Jo Minjoon looked towards the applicants. The wrinkles on their foreheads showed just how quickly their minds were moving right now.

He looked towards the hall. The demi chef applicants who cooked in the first group, as well as the selected prep cooks and apprentice were all sitting there. When Ella, who had been sitting in front of the table made eye contact with Jo Minjoon, she smiled like a baby and waved her hand with an excited look on her face. Jo Minjoon lightly smiled and looked next to her.

‘Javier. Current top candidate.’

Unless any of the remaining 13 had better skills than he did, he was pretty certain to be selected.

The dish that he showed was not a main but an appetizer. Honestly, that was the smartest dish to make. In the short amount of time they had, an appetizer made more sense than a main to show off your skills.

Javier’s appetizer was unique. He lightly poached a gould’s razor shell and wrapped it with a squid’s body chopped into the right size, put carp roe on top of it, and then ground up dried sage and thyme to make it look like snow. After that he smoked an egg yolk and placed it in the fridge to let it cool. That was the end of his dish.

On first glance, it seems pretty simple. In reality, the dish only scored 7 points. However, it was not lacking in taste compared to some 8 point or even 9 point dishes. The fragrance of the herbs and the unique fragrance of seafood working in harmony, that feeling was so refreshing that it would be considered one of the best dishes Jo Minjoon has ever tried.

‘We could put this on the menu right away.’

That was Rachel's opinion. Jo Minjoon felt the same way. He was also stimulated at the same time. A 7 point dish. If he was asked to make it, he definitely could. However, if he was asked to make a 7 point dish that could receive a similar type of opinion, he had no confidence at all.

It was the side effect of only focusing on the point of a dish until now. An empty shell that relied on splendor and craftsmanship. The traits that the villains tended to show often in cooking movies or dramas, that type of trait was what Jo Minjoon himself had.

‘I need to fix it.’

He wasn't anxious. He was still young, and since he was able to figure it out early, he'll be able to quickly fix it. He was also feeling a bit refreshed. He was able to determine the cause of this unknown frustration he has had for a while.

Jo Minjoon's eyes became serious. The situation was much different now than when the prep cooks were cooking. Unlike with the prep cooks, Jo Minjoon could not instruct the demi chef's recipes. First of all, the mission was about their signature dish. In other words, it was a free for all, and at the end, they would be the same level as Minjoon as demi chefs. Him trying to tell them what they're doing wrong may end up just causing some upset feelings.

Because of that, once they started cooking, Jo Minjoon could not remove his eyes from the tips of their fingers. The way they selected their ingredients and prepared it. The way they handled their pen and knives, and their knowledge that showed through their recipes.

Once he acknowledged them as competitors to learn from, the things he felt from the same movements were different as well. Even from the bad habits they were showing, Jo Minjoon was able to think about the things he would need to watch out for.

‘They do say that cooking is something you learn by looking over the shoulder

That phrase seemed realistic. Jo Minjoon was extremely interested in Janet. It wasn't because her level was the highest. It was because she was making some interesting selections.

‘Lemon butter and pear. A risotto flavored with mint. Putting a grilled salmon on top of that’

Risotto was a sensitive dish. You needed to focus for a long time, and in order to make a perfect risotto, you have to accurately measure your ingredients from the beginning. Once the broth is reduced down, you couldn't add anything to it because the rice might expand.

That was why it was difficult to add a lot of ingredients to risottos. You needed to find the balance of all of the ingredients while making sure the flavors didn't clash with each other. Jo Minjoon continued to watch Janet's dish with curiosity.

It didn't take long for that curiosity to turn into admiration. A shiny green risotto was laid into the plate, and when the grilled salmon which was covered with olive oil and butter using the arroser method was placed on top of it the dish turned into a 9 point dish.

‘.....I've never seen anyone make a 9 point dish so easily.’

Anderson and Kaya both had cooking level of 8. However, even if they were standing in the same place, they would not be able to easily make a perfect dish just like she did.

Experienced. It had been a long time since he saw anyone who really fit that word. She was a well sharpened blade that it was hard to believe she was at the demi chef level.

“.....Anderson, where are the applications?”

“Hold on. Oh, here.”

After receiving the applications from Anderson, Minjoon started to read Janet's information. He then let out a small ‘wow.’ The name of the restaurant she used to work at was not that foreign to

him. Pierro Garnish. It was a restaurant that had maintained three stars for almost 20 years.

“Why? Are you interested in her?”

“Of course. Based on what I’ve seen so far, her cooking is the most memorable.”

“.....That green risotto? I don’t know. It looks like a typical vegan dish.”

“If it was vegan, there’s no way she would use dairy products or fish.”

“Then at best a pesco?” (TL: Guessing short for pescatarian)

“Even if that’s the case, that’s not something that’ll lose you points. What matters is the taste.”

“The problem is that it is typical.”

“I’m guessing you didn’t pay attention to her cooking.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson with an ‘I knew it’ type of look. Anderson responded back with a thorny voice.

“No, you think I can watch all of those chefs cook?”

“I did.”

“The two of you. Stop it and come over here. We need to judge.”

“..... Sorry.”

At Rachel’s words, Anderson responded with a grouchy face and grumpily walked. Some of the applicants even laughed while looking at him. Rachel went to the first applicant and asked.

“Based on what I saw, you boiled the chicken down in a sauce, and then braised it with mereng.”

“Yes. I made the sauce with orange juice and a bit of soy sauce.”

Jo Minjoon cut a small piece of chicken breast and put it in my mouth. It was quite a fun taste. The moist mereng worked well

with the dry chicken breast, and the chicken breast didn't feel too dry either. It wasn't because he boiled it.

People tend to think that if you boil meat, water will enter and make it moist. It's not like that kind of thinking is completely wrong. But it only pertains to meat that has been marinated with salt and had its internal salinity increased. If you marinate it like that, brush off the salt, and then put it in a sauce, the broth or sauce will seep in very well due to osmosis.

‘Cooking is truly a science.’

As time goes by, there might even be people doing molecular gastronomy at home. Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“It's a dish that shows you what a chef with a strong basic foundation should be able to do. The chicken breast was perfect and the mereng was light. The two made a great combination.”

“Thank you.”

The applicant smiled and responded to Minjoon's words. Regardless of success or failure to join Rose Island, being able to get an evaluation from Jo Minjoon was a great opportunity. It was a chance to get the evaluation from someone who officially has the most sensitive tongue in the world. Plus, next to him was the legendary Rachel. Could there be a more luxurious exam anywhere?

It would be great if all of them could receive a good evaluation, however, there were also dishes that it was extremely difficult to only say praises. It didn't matter whether it was because they were nervous or because they lacked the talent. The dish in front of them was the only thing they could use to evaluate them.

“Sweet potato mousse and codfish mousse.....honestly, when I was watching you cook, I was looking forward to the taste. However, the two are not in harmony at all. Mr. Chris. What is the reason? Is the recipe wrong or did you not successfully follow the

recipe?”

“Honestly, this steak is cooked well. But that’s it. A sauce made with apple cider vinegar and wine. To call it a signature dish on just that I feel like it is too lacking. It’s also not like the combination of the two in the sauce was highlighted either.”

“Each of the ingredients are alive. However, if you were to ask me if they all work well together, it would be hard for me to answer yes.”

Why did it feel like they were still so far away from Janet’s risotto? Jo Minjoon looked towards Janet with a slightly tired expression. Maybe it was because they were both Asian that he felt a weird sense of familiarity, but Janet was looking back at him with a cold expression without an ounce of friendliness. Rachel started to speak.

“A combination of pear and mint the broth was chicken broth?”

“Yes. In a fruit risotto, I believe that using chicken broth is the best way to bring out the flavor.”

“I could feel a refreshing taste in the rice other than pear and mintit is more soft than sharp. Hmm.....did you use lemon butter?”

“Yes. You really do know everything.”

Janet’s expression as she spoke almost as if she was in awe was quite gentle. It was much different than the expression she gave Jo Minjoon. It made him feel a bit disappointed. But that disappointment disappeared the moment he put the risotto and salmon in his mouth. Jo Minjoon spoke in an excited voice. He had the happiest expression on his face, happier than any expression he showed the other applicants.

“This is really good! I was wondering how you would handle the bitter taste of the mint, but the sweetness of the pear helps to

cancel out the bitterness. The refreshing yet oily nature of the lemon butter makes the rice go down much smoother and I don't need to say anything about the salmon. It was a perfect arrosor without any faults. It's amazing."

"Yes. Thank you."

Compared to the excited Jo Minjoon, Janet's voice was stoic. Anderson wasn't that friendly either, but Jo Minjoon felt it was almost poisonous. Feeling like he was being hated, Jo Minjoon asked Anderson in a crestfallen voice.

"Do people tend to have a bad first impression of me?"

"I can't honestly say no."

".....Everybody seemed fine until now."

After trying a few more dishes, it was time for them to discuss their thoughts. Janet didn't seem to like him very much, but Jo Minjoon liked her. He also liked her food.

Jo Minjoon strongly stated his opinion.

"Janet Pei. I think we must bring this person on board. The recipe was great and I couldn't find any faults in her skills either. There were many other good applicants, but she's the only one I feel certain that she is better than me."

It was quite a heated push. Seeing Minjoon act like Janet's fan, Anderson blunted answered.

".....How nice of you. You're so persistent even though she's acting so cold." (TL: Don't you know that's Minjoon's type?)

"The important thing is the food. If they cook well, I don't even care if they swear up a storm."

"I guess that's why you acted the same way with Kaya."

Jo Minjoon didn't respond. He looked at Rachel and asked again.

"Let's bring her on. This person."

“We must be fated to meet like this again.”

Janet squinted at Javier who was happily holding his hand out in front of her. She spoke as she shook his hand.

“Since it is confirmed that we are not just passerbys in each other’s lives, I guess one handshake is okay.”

“Congratulations. On being selected.”

“Miss Janet, you were selected as well. You talk like it’s someone else’s business.”

“Just call me Janet. Being called Miss Janet makes me feel sick.”

“No problem. Janet. Ah, Mr. Minjoon, and Mr. Anderson.”

Javier headed towards them with a bright expression. Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders as he answered.

“Just Minjoon for me as well.”

“Okay. Minjoon. Then please just call me Javier.”

“That Gould’s razor shell and squid earlier I’m not sure what to call it. Either way, that dish, was really great. Let’s work well together.”

Jo Minjoon smiled as he said that. In the hall, all nine of the new family members were becoming familiar with one other. It felt like a small party.

Anderson didn’t memorize all of their names and didn’t really feel the need to memorize it, but Jo Minjoon was different. Memorization was one of his specialties. Watching Jo Minjoon going face to face to greet each one of them, Anderson shook his head as he spoke.

“I can’t ever act like that.”

“You didn’t seem like such a bad person on the broadcasts.”

“Who would do bad things on a broadcast? That’s stupidity

before being bad.” (TL: Peter, plus pretty much half the contestants on Hell’s Kitchen. Master Chef contestants, not too bad. Master Chef Junior contestants, just ADORABLE)

He was grumbling as he answered, but even such a response seemed likeable. Javier smiled as he spoke.

“I would be happy if you called me Javier. Can I just call you Anderson?”

“That’s not okay.”

It wasn’t Anderson’s voice. Javier looked down, chasing after the childish voice surrounding his ears. Ella cockily turned her chin up, as if she was the owner of this humble party. The disappointing part was that she wasn’t wearing a dress, just a flower patterned t-shirt and yellow shorts. Anderson asked in a somewhat shaky voice.

“Why not?”

“Uncle Minjoon said that you need to call people by the name they like the most.”

“.....What is the name I like?”

Anderson felt a weird sense of anxiety grabbing onto his feet. Ella laughed mischievously and answered.

“Uncle dduksam!” (TL: Really just Uncle Mochi!)

“.....I knew it would be like this. Why does that punk always

“What is she talking about? Dduksam?”

“It’s nothing. Forget about it. Also.....”

Anderson debated whether to tell him it was duksam and not dduksam, before shutting his mouth. It wouldn’t be to his benefit to say that. At that moment, Janet took a sip of sparkling water before starting to speak.

“You’re all so friendly already. Although it would be better to not be so friendly just yet.”

“Why not?”

“Rose Island. This place is starting to bloom again. That means nothing has been decided. And of the things that have not been decided, there are

Janet spoke in a sharp voice like a female warrior.

“What section each demi chef will be in charge of. This should be a part of it. FYI, I am calling dibs on appetizers.”

“.....What will you do if I am also interested in appetizers?”

Anderson asked in a quite challenging voice. Janet answered with a confident voice.

“You’ll need to compete with me.”

Chapter 170: Overlapping Shadows (1)

“Oo.....”

Ella grabbed her cheeks with a complicated expression. Watching Ella, Janet asked in a confident voice.

“What do you think? It’s tastier, right?”

“.....I like the one Uncle Minjoon made better.”

“That’s fine. What you like is up to you. But what about the taste?”

Ella just silently twisted her lips at Janet’s question. It made her angry, but the ones Janet made were much tastier than the ones Jo Minjoon made her. Her sullen expression became the answer. Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders.

“Ella. It’s proper etiquette to say it is tasty if it is tasty.”

“Uncle’s jelly is tasty too.”

Maybe she didn’t want to say Jo Minjoon lost even if she died; Ella started to tear up in frustration. Could there be any other fan who was so passionate? Janet asked in a stiff voice.

“Did I just become the villain?”

“Not a villain, probably just an evil witch who bothers the fairy.”

“.....I’ve been called a witch quite often.”

He was half joking, but Janet’s response was quite serious. Jo Minjoon felt like he was getting the chills and looked at Janet. Did she say she was Taiwanese and Japanese? She didn’t look much different than Koreans so he felt quite a bit of familiarity at first, but the more he got to know Janet, he realized that she was really hard to understand (TL: Anderson thought the same of you) ‘Based on how she treats Ella, she doesn’t seem that bad of a person.’

Of course, it is hard to determine a person’s nature just by how

they treat children. However, the expression that Janet shows Ella every so often was full of love. It was almost as if she was looking at her own child. If it a person who can love someone else's child that much, Jo Minjoon thought that they must have a good nature.

‘Even though she’s still thorny to the other people.’

Anderson was just as thorny so he didn't really try to talk to Janet. The prep cooks were busy becoming friends with each other, and the bakers were the same way. We don't even need to talk about the apprentice. Naturally, it was difficult for the apprentice to casually speak to the demi chefs.

A common stereotype about Western countries is a horizontal relationship at work without a hierarchy. Of course, there are some of those based on the company. But that was not the case in restaurants.

The reason a hierarchy is enforced in a restaurant can be explained by the nature of the profession. It had to be that way. As customers crowded the restaurant, the kitchen will end up becoming busier. Inevitably, people are going to become chaotic in those situations. In order for perfection to happen, a firm command system was crucial.

‘.....I guess there really isn't a reason for the demi chefs to be friendly with each other.’

We are going to be in different sections anyways, so there shouldn't be many times our paths overlap each other. But that was only referring to the kitchen efficiency. No matter what, unless something weird happens, they were colleagues who would work together for many years. If it is awkward to see each other, that'll probably be extremely difficult to handle.

With that in mind.

“Try eating this! It is a quiche that Miss Lisa made. It is the best quiche I've ever eaten!”

Javier was a pretty laid-back. A positive aura seemed to emanate from his entire body, and he was actually that type of person. Lisa spoke with a slightly embarrassed expression from behind Javier.

“Please don’t hype it up so much.”

“I’m not hyping it up. I’m just telling the truth?”

“Even just telling the truth is hyping it up. My bread is at that level.”

“.....I guess there wasn’t a reason for me to hype it up.”

Lisa laughed mischievously at Javier’s words. Jo Minjoon was quite surprised. Lisa was pretty similar to Janet but quiet in a different way. It was really hard to see that type of bright smile on her face.

“Ah, Minjoon. What are you doing. Here, eat it.”

“You hype it up and raise my expectations and then you give me a tiny one like this?”

Jo Minjoon spoke in a disappointed voice. There was only a piece of pie the size of a finger on his plate. The crust was crispy and flaky, and melted cheese and dried tomatoes were baked on top of it. Quiche. It was a pie dish that the French often ate for a meal. Javier smiled brightly.

“We are chefs. You’re supposed to tell the aesthetics with a single bite.”

It was true. Jo Minjoon put the pie in his mouth and slowly chewed it. Maybe it was because it was a pie, but there was quite a bit of butter. The flavor spreading in his mouth was sweet, and the oily taste of the cheese was strong. Jo Minjoon quietly thought about it. Where was this cheese from? He combed through his memory to remember the name and found out he was right when he looked at the system. Jo Minjoon spoke with a satisfied expression.

“It is Gruyère cheese. The taste of the oil was strong.”

“You really do get it all right.”

“Gruyère cheese has a strong flavor. Ella, you must be happy. Does your mommy make you bread like this everyday?”

“Yes. But I like jelly more than bread.”

Lisa looked at Ella with a stern expression. Watching Ella turn away from feeling her stern expression, Janet warmly smiled. Of course, her expression changed back as soon as she made eye contact with Jo Minjoon.

“Janet, you must really like kids.”

“.....What kind of person doesn't like children?”

“You find them here and there. Saying they're loud and annoying.”

“Uh, but I'm quiet. I also don't annoy people.”

“Yes. It is because Ella is a good little girl.”

Jo Minjoon gently smiled at Ella who was protesting looking like she was being treated unfairly. Ella laughed and asked.

“But uncle, what will you be cooking? Auntie Janet said she was cooking ah.....app.....what was it called again?”

“Appetizer?”

“Oh, yes! Auntie said that'll be her job. What about you, uncle?”

“Still debating.”

“I wish uncle will make jelly.”

Janet, who had been listening to Ella started to laugh. She started to laugh while trying to hold it back, but maybe she felt embarrassed by the eyes that turned towards her, she covered her mouth with her hand and turned around. Lisa approached Janet and started to speak.

“You must really like my daughter.”

“.....You have a wonderful daughter. I’m envious of you.”

Not only did it seem honest, Janet’s voice also carried some kind of heaviness. But Lisa was Lisa. She did not panic and answered back with a heavy voice of her own.

“She’s my greatest pride and joy.”

“The two of you, I get that you’re getting close to each other, but don’t you think it feels too much like a documentary?”

“I didn’t give any life advice or anything?”

“Not all documentaries share life advice. Now instead of a documentary, hmm.....what would be good?”

“In the kitchen, it is usually comedy or drama.”

Jo Minjoon answered as if he was joking. Javier smiled and started to speak.

“A drama would be nice. I think a comedy would be too tiring.”

“So what is it you would like to cook, Javier?”

“I’m sorry to Janetbut I want appetizers as well.”

“The two of you are overlapping. Was appetizer always such a popular section?”

“It’s good for us.”

A sassy voice came from behind him. It was Anderson. Jo Minjoon looked at him and asked.

“I thought you were interested in apps as well. Where are you planning on going?”

“Pasta section.”

“.....Hmm.”

Jo Minjoon crossed his arms and put a fist to his chin. It is called the pasta section, but in reality, it was the section that covered all

grains, including risotto. It was also a section Jo Minjoon was interested in.

Each restaurant had a different way of splitting sections. Chinese restaurants tended to split it as noodles, fire, and knife sections, and western restaurants tended to do it differently based on size. Fish, meat, grains, you could split it based on ingredients like that or pan, oven, pot, etc, you could split it based on tools like that too.

Rachel had informed them there would be five sections. Main, which would be responsible for meat, fish, or steak. Appetizer to handle soup and mousse, carpaccio, ceviche, and other dishes like that. A section dedicated to pasta, risotto and other grain related dishes. The dessert and all oven-related section for bread and cakes, puddings, and other dishes was for Lisa as the pâtissier, and the remaining section was

‘Molecular gastronomy.’

Rachel had retired before molecular gastronomy was even developed. He wondered how much Rachel would even know about molecular gastronomy, but Rachel was confident. It was as if she had something she believed in.

One thing that was for sure was that Jo Minjoon had no thoughts about picking molecular gastronomy. He was definitely interested, but there was nothing he knew about it. If he was to take on molecular gastronomy, it would have to be at the beginner level. He wasn’t confident that he could properly serve in the demi chef role in that section.

If you were to consider the abilities of his system, the best section for him would be appetizer. Appetizers were the dishes that required the most finesse when it came to the proper ratio of ingredients. His system would allow him to find out something was wrong immediately, based on the points it awarded the dish.

But the section Minjoon wanted was pasta that Anderson wanted,

or main. The majority of appetizers required persistence and patience rather than moment by moment reaction, and rather than that, Jo Minjoon wanted to fight against time and focus on pasta or steak where he would need to be on his game and focus all the time. That fit his style better. Jo Minjoon, who had been contemplating what to pick, let out a sigh and started to speak.

“.....But who cares if we talk about it like this. It’s not like the method of determining the section has been decided.”

“That’s why it is important we talk like this. We have to at least say what we want to do and think about it, so that it doesn’t feel like we’re getting paid to do nothing.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders at Javier’s words.

“I don’t know. I’m still unpaid.”

“Psh, why is that a problem? You got a credit card from Rachel and she’s even covering your housing.”

“Either way, I am still very worried about it. Oh, I am sure about one thing.”

He firmly spoke.

“I will not be doing molecular gastronomy.” (TL: Oh, sounds like that’s exactly where you are headed.) €

“4,996, 4,998, 4,999.....”

Jo Minjoon was counting numbers before staring at his phone for a while and then clicking refresh. Soon, he had a wide smile on his face.

“Five thousand people!”

“.....You, you did it on purpose just so I would hear it, didn’t you.”

Rachel’s house. To be specific, Jo Minjoon’s room. Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon with a grunted expression.

Jo Minjoon laughed as he answered.

“Are you jealous?”

“.....Not really.”

The number that Jo Minjoon had been counting was the number of his fans on Starbook. Compared to Anderson who had started a long time ago and had only recently hit 4,000 fans, it was a much faster growth. Anderson grumbled as he started to speak.

“It’s because I don’t post much.”

“I don’t think so. You seem to post at least once a day. Something like a daily cooking tip.”

“.....Shut up. I’m going to sleep.”

“Hey, don’t just lay down on someone else’s bed without permission.”

“I’ll buy it. This bed. How much is it?”

“Isaac said that the mattress alone was \$4,000.”

Anderson jumped up once he heard that and looked at the bed. He pushed down on the bed and made a curious expression.

“This is my salary?”

“To be specific, it costs \$500 more than your salary.”

“.....You’re not even getting paid.”

“At first I was a bit disappointed, but this isn’t bad either. I get to sleep on a mattress that’s more expensive than a certain someone’s salary.”

“I want to come live here too.”

“I think that will be difficult until you defeat your parents.”

“Even if I get past them, I don’t know if teacher Rachel would accept me. I’m jealous. She pretty much treats you like a son. How does it feel?”

Jo Minjoon did not respond. It wasn't like he was trying to ignore him. It was the alarm that popped up on his smartphone that made him freeze. Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon and made a weird expression.

“What. Did something happen?”

“.....Uh, umm. Hey, is today the 25th?”

“No. The 23rd. Why?”

“Take a look.”

Jo Minjoon shortly answered while showing Anderson his phone. It was a picture that was on the screen. A picture with an airplane ticket. The destination was LAX. It was the airport in LA. Arrival date, August 25th. Anderson asked in a strange voice.

“What about it?”

Jo Minjoon pressed the top of his screen rather than answering. The words that appeared made Anderson let out a sigh with a nervous look on his face.

[Kaya: The woman who really needs to diet, will be there soon.]

Chapter 171: Overlapping Shadows (2)

In general, the tasks for an apprentice who has just recently entered the kitchen is simple. Prep the ingredients, clean the kitchen, and do whatever tasks the chefs or prep cooks tell them to do. Since the majority of an apprentice's tasks were chores, there were many people who thought that it was a waste of time. But that wasn't the case.

First, it helps them figure out how to differentiate the different ingredients. The ingredients' condition, how to prep it, how to store it. On top of that, since they needed to use their knives to prep the ingredients, their dexterity had to get better as well.

Plus, watching the other chefs and following the orders they bark at them also helps the apprentice understand the flow of a kitchen and the timing that is required to get things done.

Of course, that was the case for a kitchen that was in operation. Rose Island was still prepping for its reopening, so the kitchen was not busy. However, they weren't just sitting back and relaxing. Although they weren't being chased by time because of customers, each of them had a lot of things to do. Rachel was busy trying to rekindle relationships with suppliers she had not talked to for ten years, and the demi chefs and prep cooks were busy getting familiar with the recipes Rachel shared with them.

Because of that, Justin, the apprentice, the person who should be the busiest in the kitchen, ended up becoming the most free person. It had to be that way. Since there wasn't much cooking going on, there wasn't much need to give him ingredient related tasks, and his hands weren't busy either. All Justin could do was clean everything in the kitchen which he had already cleaned to the point they were shining, and observe the environment of the kitchen. There was actually something Justin could confirm with certainty through that.

‘.....Minjoon. Did something happen recently?’

Jo Minjoon was calm and gentle, but because he was polite and straight-forward like a scholar, he could come off as stiff sometimes. At times, he even seemed like a food tasting robot, since he could correctly guess anything that went into his mouth. But lately, he hadn’t been that way. Maybe something good happened, but he seemed extremely happy and would even start to smile for no reason.

Justin must not have been the only one with that question. At lunch that day, Rachel started to speak.

“Minjoon, you seem so happy these days. Is it because you’re finally realizing that you are a new chef?”

“Do I seem really happy?”

“Yes. Extremely. People might even think you won the lottery or something.”

At Lisa’s response, Jo Minjoon just quietly stroked the right part of his neck. He could feel the weird feeling of the burn mark that was hidden underneath the collar of his chef uniform. Normally, people would feel sad about such an injury, but that wasn’t the case for Jo Minjoon. For him, it felt like the string of fate connecting him and Kaya. Anderson clicked his tongue as he spoke.

“Apparently he is seeing Kaya today.”

“Kaya..... THAT KAYA?!”

Lisa was not the one to respond to Anderson. Justin, who had been quietly listening to the conversation raised his voice with an excited expression. Jo Minjoon nodded his head with a bright expression.

“I’m meeting her today. She said she’ll be in LA quite often for the next few months.”

“.....I don’t like that panda lady.”

At Minjoon’s answer, Ella grumbled in a sulky voice. Jo Minjoon had to think for a second. Panda lady? He wondered if she was saying that because of the smoky makeup on Kaya’s eyes. While Lisa was staring at Ella with a stern expression, Jo Minjoon consoled Ella with a gentle voice.

“Kaya will like you. She really likes cute children like you.”

“What is cute about me? Nothing is cute about me. I am all grown up.” (TL: Everything you just said my dear. That is what makes you cute.) Even though she was talking like she didn’t like it, she soon started to laugh. Javier then asked Minjoon a question.

“Minjoon, can I ask you a somewhat personal question?”

“No.”

“.....Don’t people usually ask what the question is first?”

“It’s pretty obvious what you are going to ask.”

Jo Minjoon answered with an expression that seemed to be saying that I know what you are thinking. Javier might have felt guilty, as he raised both of his hands and started to speak.

“Then I will ask you a different question. That’ll be okay right?”

“Fine. Whatever. Ask away.”

“Are you two dating?”

“.....Javier.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Javier with a cooled off expression. Javier answered with a calm expression.

“Why? I was originally going to ask something like who you think the sous chef will be.”

“Why is that a personal question?”

“Since I was asking for your personal opinion, it was a personal question.”

It was an excuse, but it was pretty convincing. Jo Minjoon placed his thumb on the burn mark for a bit before answering calmly.

“We are not dating.”

It wasn't wrong. It was true that there was quite a lovely atmosphere between the two of them, but they never had the opportunity to be in that type of relationship. Javier did not doubt him and nodded his head.

“You still have a lot of events that need to happen. I'm sure it'll be enjoyable.”

“Let's just talk about the sous chef. Who do you think it will be?”

It was very clear Minjoon was trying to change the topic of discussion. At this point, it was okay to give him a way out. Javier smiled brightly as he answered.

“Rather than who will come, the question is, how many will come.”

“Since she said she will not be getting a second chef, the sous chef will need to take the second chef's role as well.....if you think about thatwill it be around two people?”

“I'm not sure Janet.”

Javier called out to Janet. Janet stopped eating the fruit pudding Lisa had made for her and turned her head. Javier asked in a mischievous tone.

“What about a bet? On how many sous chefs will come.”

“I don't have money to bet.”

“We can bet something other than money. Appetizer. We can determine who will be in charge of the section with this bet.”

“.....I'm fine not getting the station because my skills are lacking, but I don't like losing it because of chance. Please make a bet with someone else.”

It was quite a cold statement, but Jo Minjoon was impressed. That short sentence showed her personality as a chef. Only skill. The type to want to determine everything by their skills alone. Maybe it was the ideal personality for a chef. However, at the same time, it was a personality that never let you relax. Jo Minjoon whispered to Anderson and asked.

“It must be hard. Right?”

“What.”

“Janet. To live with tension like that every day. I think it’ll be really difficult.”

“I can hear everything you are saying.”

Janet was still looking at her plate while speaking in a quiet voice. Jo Minjoon was completely surprised and looked towards her. He made sure to talk quietly. He answered back in an awkward voice.

“.....Your ears are very bright.”

“The weaker you are, the more you tend to perk up your ears. Like a rabbit.”

“Janet, why are you weak?”

“I don’t know. To say it myself is a bit embarrassing.”

Janet stopped there and continued to eat. She was pretty calm, as if saying she didn’t hear anything out of the ordinary. Maybe she was used to it because she used to hear things like this often in the restaurant she used to work at.

“.....I feel weird even though I didn’t say anything bad about her.”

Jo Minjoon grumbled as he put the ravioli in his mouth. Janet had made it. Fresh ravioli made from scratch. It was a ravioli that had a higher absorption rate than ravioli made from pre-made pasta. The sauce made of sage and butter made the pasta seem

much softer, and the shrimp and lamb inside went down easily without feeling greasy because of the onion and herbs mixed with them. Jo Minjoon quickly forgot about what just happened and started to smile.

“Janet. This ravioli is really good.”

“There’s nothing better than that ravioli for an appetizer.”

Javier quickly interjected.

“Oo, I’m so full. One bite and I’m already full. It’s so filling that it would be better as a main than as an appetizer.”

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That evening, Jo Minjoon got on the road to the airport. Even though it was the airport, it was pretty much next door. It took about 20 minutes to get there. Anderson was driving the car while grumbling.

“You should have brought an international license. What the heck is this? I am not your driver.”

“Even if I had an international license, once my work visa comes out, I can’t use it. That’s what the law says. Immigrants need to get a new license.”

“It’s not like the person changes when they switch from tourist to immigrant. What kind of useless law is that?”

“Why. You can see Kaya with me.”

“I don’t want to get death glares by getting between the two of you.”

“I don’t think you’d be getting death glares. At least not from me.”

“Hmph. Sure you won’t.”

Although Anderson was grumbling, he still started to accelerate. Jo Minjoon asked in a worried voice.

“I didn’t tell her I was going to meet her at the airport. What if we show up and she says she doesn’t even have time to talk to me?”

“Then tell her right now. Oh, I guess she doesn’t have internet since she’s on a plane.” (TL: Back then, no wifi on planes. Just snakes...) “Well, if she really can’t, then I’ll just have to come back after seeing her face.”

“Ha. To go on a forty minute round trip just to see her face. For a woman who isn’t even your girlfriend.”

“Even you are being like this? Plus, even if you were the one who was coming, I would definitely have shown up to welcome you.”

Anderson couldn’t decide how he should feel. Should he feel goosebumps at the cheesiness or warm at the thought. He couldn’t figure it out.

“.....Just focus on wooing Kaya. You don’t need to do it to me too.”

He sounded like a boy who could not be honest. Jo Minjoon just smiled quietly.

When they arrived at the airport, it was still about 30 minutes until Kaya’s arrival time.

“I’m not going to come back to get you.No. Are you even coming back tonight? Maybe like that time in Florence.....”

“Stop making fun of me. Anyways, thanks for bringing me here. Is there anything you want me to say to Kaya? I’ll tell her for you.”

“Tell her to lose some weight.”

“.....That might be a little difficult.”

Anderson laughed and shifted gears as he drove away. Inside the airport, there were many people pushing carriers as well as many people holding up signs. Jo Minjoon took out his smartphone.

[Me: Let me know when you land.]

[Kaya: I just landed. Why?]

[Me: You landed?]

[Kaya: Yes. I'm at the airport. But why are you asking.]

[Me: I'm also at the airport right now.]

After that text, there was no reply even after a few minutes. It was almost as if her wifi got disconnected. Maybe she was surprised. It was the moment he was about to text her again. A call came through. It was Kaya. Jo Minjoon put his smartphone to his ear and grumbled.

“Why did you suddenly stop talking? I thought something happened to you.”

[Who are you. Why did you suddenly appear.]

“I was trying to surprise you. Were you surprised?”

[If you're going to surprise someone, show your face at least.]

“How am I supposed to know where you are when there are so many people.”

[My family had no problem finding me in a crowded market with hundreds of people.]

“That's family.”

There was a sudden silence on the other side. He couldn't see it, but he could imagine how sharp her gaze was right now. Jo Minjoon chuckled as he spoke.

“So where are you? Can you meet right now? Do you have anything to do?”

[It's night time. What would a chef have to do at night? Well, I guess I do need to go unpack at the hotelbut I can leave that to my agent. Since my agent pushes me around so much, shouldn't I make him at least do things like this?]

“So where are you?”

[LA Airport.]

“.....I’m pretty sure there are at least a couple thousand people here right now.” (TL: In the LA airport in the evening? Probably at least ten thousand.) [Come towards the info desk. I’m wearing a white hoodie with jeans. Along with a mask and sunglasses.]

Jo Minjoon frowned. He wondered what kind of fashion that was. As he headed to the desk and saw it for himself, he could truly see how weird she was dressed. Jo Minjoon ended the call. Kaya must not have seen him yet as she still had the phone at her ear.

“Hello. Hello? Huh, he hung up?”

“Kaya.”

“.....Ah. You came.”

Kaya lowered her sunglasses a bit to verify it was Jo Minjoon and nodded her head. Her voice was quite coarse. On the phone, he thought it might be reception issues, but her voice was cracking severely compared to normal. Jo Minjoon started to rattle off questions with a worried expression.

“Why are you dressed like that? No. The clothes are fine. But what is up with the mask and sunglasses? You’re not a celebrity or anything. Plus, why is your voice like that? Are you sick? Is it a cold? Are you wearing the mask because of the cold? Have you taken any medicine?”

“Ah, so much nagging. Stop there. For meeting after such a long time, shouldn’t there be a better mood?”

“Mood?”

Hearing that, Jo Minjoon slowly turned his head and looked around him. Among the people that passed by, there were many people who seemed to recognize them. Of course it was a mystery as to whether they recognized Kaya as well, but there were many people who were taking pictures on their phones as well.

However, he couldn't always pay attention to such things. Jo Minjoon reached out his hand. The fingers that had been caressing Kaya's palm slowly intertwined with her fingers. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon. Since she was wearing dark sunglasses and the mask was covering her face, Jo Minjoon had to imagine her expression. What kind of face was she making? Would she be frowning, smiling, or was she surprised? Kaya's mask started to expand. (TL: Ooh la la.)
“.....Don't blame me if you catch the cold.”

Jo Minjoon answered.

“If that happens, then you can take care of me.”

Chapter 172: Overlapping Shadows (3)

“.....Stop saying such cheesy things. It’s embarrassing.”

“You’re wearing a mask and sunglasses anyways. You don’t even need to care about people’s gazes.”

“But they already know it is me.”

“How would they know?”

“Is there anybody else you would be holding hands with other than me?”

There wasn’t anybody else. Jo Minjoon just gazed at Kaya. At that moment, Kaya was extremely thankful for her sunglasses and mask. If she was not hiding behind them, she was not confident that she could casually respond to that gaze. Maybe it was because of the cold, but the hand that Jo Minjoon was holding onto felt like it was boiling. Minjoon started to speak.

“Why did you stop contacting me?”

“Sorry.”

“Is it because of that thing you mentioned last time? That there was something that came up?”

Kaya did not respond to Minjoon’s question. He really didn’t even need to ask. The only reason Kaya would avoid his attempts to contact her would be because of that. Kaya quickly put her right hand that Minjoon was not holding onto, inside her hoodie. Jo Minjoon asked in a worried tone.

“You’re cold right? Should we go somewhere warm?”

“.....Hey. Today’s highest temperature is 27 degrees.”

“Oh, right.”

Jo Minjoon responded with a silly look on his face.

Regardless of the gazes and the smartphones faced towards them,

the two of them casually walked as if there was nobody else. It was only after leaving the airport that they realized that they didn't really have anywhere to go. Jo Minjoon asked with a perplexed expression.

“Where should we go?”

“What? You came here without even figuring out where to go?”

“I didn't realize I would get to spend time with you like this. But are you feeling okay? Fever..... you seem to have a slight fever.”

Jo Minjoon put his hand on her forehead and neck before asking in a worried tone. Kaya responded like she couldn't believe him.

“I understand the forehead, but aren't you being too forward by touching my neck?”

“I don't know. I remember that someone kissed my neck last time.”

“What? Which bitch oh, it was me.”

Kaya had a frown for a moment before remembering what happened in Florence and started to mumble in a silly voice.

Jo Minjoon laughed as he started to speak.

“So, what do you want to do? Do you want to rest? Or do you want to go sightseeing?”

“I'm hungry. I want to eat.”

“Oh, there is a place that comes to mind. Kaya, do you like a fun place or a fancy place?”

Kaya took off her sunglasses. Her eyes that had thick smoky makeup were glaring at him.

“If you keep making fun of me, don't blame me for hitting you.”

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“And the place you bring me to is a hot dog place?”

“You said you were hungry. Plus, you’ll be surprised when you try it. It is a well-known store in LA.”

The place Minjoon took Kaya to was a single story store located downtown. In addition to the hot dog, they were famous for their Belgian French fries and Belgian beer.....but the most unique was the hot dog. Topping, sauce, sausage. You could pick from a variety of those three items, but their greatest weapon in this store was the sausage. Kaya was mumbling in an angry voice.

“Jalapeno sausage, Italian Vegetarian sausage, apple sausage, mango sausage,snake meat sausage? What the heck is this place?”

“Isn’t it fun? I don’t think I can stop coming here until I try every one of their different sausages.”

“.....You were planning on bringing me here regardless of whether I said a fun place or a fancy place, weren’t you?”

Jo Minjoon turned his head away in guilt. After ordering, he grabbed Kaya’s hand and headed towards the end of the bar. It was the place that would get the least attention from other people. He couldn’t continue to hold her hand after sitting down so he slowly let go. Seeing him let go of her hand, Kaya started to speak.

“You see quite used to doing this. Did you have a lot of prior experience?”

“No. I’ve never done this before.”

‘You’ve never dated before?’

Jo Minjoon thought about it for a second. The thirty year old Jo Minjoon did have experience. But the current Jo Minjoon did not. He didn’t know what the correct answer should be. However, the fact that he could not answer right away made Kaya’s eyes turn sharp.

“So you DO have experience. Was she pretty?”

“.....No, I don’t have experience.”

“Now you’re even lying to me. I thought you said you wouldn’t lie to me?”

“Really. I don’t have any. In the first place, why do I have to defend myself about this?”

“You really don’t know why?”

“Yes. I’m asking because I don’t know.”

At Jo Minjoon’s genuine response, Kaya stared at him with a doubting look. It was at that moment. A bald white man covered in tattoos, with arms the size of a woman’s thigh, approached them with a plate of hot dogs, French fries, and sauce. He looked towards Jo Minjoon and started to speak. Compared to his rough appearance, his voice was quite high pitched.

“You came again. Minjoon. I saw the video after you came by last time. Absolute taste. Now that I think about it, you could probably correctly guess the ingredients in these toppings and sauces.”

“Should I not eat it?”

“Of course not. What kind of person would take a dish away from a customer because they have a sensitive tongue? I’ll be happy if you enjoy the food. Ah, the same for your girlfriend. Please enjoy your time here.”

He didn’t seem to recognize Kaya. He might actually not know who she was. Unless you enjoyed watching TV, even if it was not Kaya and it was some famous Hollywood actor, you still wouldn’t recognize them. The only reason he learned that Minjoon had absolute taste was after listening to the other customers and their stories.

“.....He doesn’t recognize me.”

“Are you disappointed?”

“No, it’s actually pretty nice. He’s treating me just like a regular

customer. These days, no matter where i go, people know that I'm Kaya Lotusit's quite tiring. Plus, they're looking for the Kaya Lotus they saw on the broadcast, and not the real Kaya Lotus."

Kaya lowered her mask and took a bite of her hot dog. She had ordered an Apple Chicken sausage, which was made with chicken that was marinated in apple sauce. On top of the sausage was a sauce made of cinnamon and apple jam, with bacon bits and onion on top of that.

Jo Minjoon's was made with lamb meat and chipotle chili peppers, with diced bell pepper grilled with truffle oil. The moment Minjoon was about to take a bite, Kaya's eyes lit up as if she suddenly remembered.

"Anyways, let's continue what we were talking about. You said you were asking because you don't know?"

Instead of responding, Minjoon took a big bite of the hot dog. Kaya, who was staring at him, suddenly leaned forward, before taking a bite from the other side of Minjoon's hot dog.

The crispy bread starting to fold, and the white teeth that were visible through her thin lips. Watching those teeth break the casing of the sausage seemed to move in slow motion. Every time her tongue that was wet with saliva became visible, he felt guilty, as if he was stealing a look at something erotic.

He couldn't determine whether she was really eating slowly or it just felt that way because he was nervous. Kaya looked at him and started to speak.

"Hmph. I'll let you off since the hot dog is good."

"You'll get me sick."

"If you were afraid of that, you shouldn't have held my hand."

"You can wash your hands."

".....Oh so you calculated all of that beforehand, I see."

Kaya answered in a sassy voice. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh before leaning his head in to the hot dog in Kaya's hand and took a bite. He ate from the same spot she had eaten from. Of course, no messages popped up to let him know something like 'Kaya's saliva is an ingredient!'"

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. Kaya looked back with a slightly nervous expression. He started to speak.

"There. Now I'll catch a cold. Thanks to a certain someone."

".....You said it'll be fine if I took care of you."

"Will you?"

"What about you? Will you take care of me?"

"If you want me to."

Kaya started to smile at Minjoon's response. For a moment, the two of them continued to eat in silence. As they were almost done eating their hot dogs, Kaya slowly started to speak.

"What if. Hypothetically speaking. What if I end up doing something really wrong to youthen what will you do?"

"I don't understand what you mean by what will you do?"

"Will you see me again? Could you forgive me?"

He couldn't figure out why she was asking such a question. There shouldn't be anything that she should be guilty of doing to him. Jo Minjoon quietly gazed at Kaya for a bit. The makeup on her eyes were clear, but her eyes themselves were cloudy with a worry he couldn't figure out. Jo Minjoon looked directly into her eyes as he answered.

"Based on what happened, I may or may not be able to forgive you. But I'm sure I would see you again."

"Why?"

"I don't think I need to even answer that."

“.....Yes, that’s true.”

With that, Kaya stopped talking again. Jo Minjoon picked up a French fry the size of a finger and dipped it in whole grain mustard before putting it in his mouth. It was surprisingly spicy. He dipped another French fry in the sauce before holding it out to Kaya. Kaya looked at the French fry for a moment before opening her mouth like a baby bird.

The conversation started back up once she finished chewing and swallowing the fry. Kaya just made it sound like it was nothing.

“I was contacted by my dad.”

Jo Minjoon’s face became stiff for a moment. He knew a bit about Kaya’s dad. He was quite a violent person. He ran away after getting Jemma pregnant. Maybe she was able to tell what he was thinking based on his expression, but Kaya quickly continued.

“Not that dad. My biological father.”

“.....Biological father?”

“Yes. He contacted me. Said he wanted to see me.”

Jo Minjoon could not determine what he should say. There was nothing Minjoon knew about her biological father. Maybe they never met in real life in his previous life, or it was never covered as a story. It could even be that he just never saw the news article.....

‘It’s not the time to think like this.’

“What else did he say?”

The important thing was the present. Kaya did not want to hear from the weird person from the future, but from the Jo Minjoon she knew. Kaya hesitated before answering.

“He said he didn’t want anything like money. All he wanted from me was a bit of time to meet and chat.”

Jo Minjoon quietly looked towards Kaya. He thought he could tell why she was avoiding him for so long. She wanted to overcome

it on her own, without relying on him. However, she was not telling him this because she gave up doing it on her own. Rather, it was probably because she felt like she overcame it in some way. If she didn't find a way to overcome it, she would probably never tell him this story. She would just end up taking it to her grave.

He cautiously grabbed onto Kaya's hand. Kaya made eye contact with a burnt french fry before talking.

"At first, I didn't want to meet with him. I waited almost twenty years, but he thinks he could just meet with me that easily? Thinking like that made me angry."

".....But you still want to meet him."

Kaya started to frown. That frown was full of sorrow and nostalgia, it was a heart wavering with happiness, and an all out attempt to at least hold on to her pride.

"I really really hate him. How could I not? To call someone who left his daughter and disappeared my fatherthere is no way I would want to see him. After everything my mom went through to raise me. To come back after all this time and say he wants to see me because we share some blood.....it makes the whole situation seem too light. It's too weird."

"It's not weird."

".....Why not?"

"In the end no matter how much you want to reject ityou are your father's daughter. Of course I also understand where you are coming from. The final decision is yours to make alone. However, Kaya. I just hope that you don't end up regretting your decision."

Those words seem to have reached deep into her heart. She looked like she was contemplating for a bit before she picked up her smartphone as if she had made up her mind. She then immediately made a call to her agent.

"Yes, it's me. Do I have any plans tomorrow? Great. I must meet

my father. Tell him to come to LA by tomorrow. No, don't give him a plane ticket. If he really wants to see me, I'm sure he'll find a way to get here. Yes. Thank you."

".....Can you just make an impulse decision like that?"

Seeing Kaya say a bunch of things before hanging up, Jo Minjoon asked with a worried expression. He was worried that she was overdoing it. Kaya slowly shook her head as she bit her lips. She looked towards Minjoon with teary eyes.

"If I don't decide now, I will just continue to push it back. Yes. I might even swear at him when I meet him. I'm confident that I could spit out all types of terrible things that exist in the world. I'm not confident at all that I would be able to understand him. Because of my mom, I have never even missed my dad. The one responsible for that is completely him. The pain from being responsible for that, I have no confidence that I could forgive him. But I must meet him."

"You don't need to forgive him. You don't need to understand him either. Swearing? Swear all you want. If you want, I'll be right there with you."

Jo Minjoon whispered to her with a voice full of pity. Seeing Minjoon like that, Kaya had a sad smile on her face.

".....Okay. You said so earlier too. That you'll take care of me."

Jo Minjoon just silently smiled. Kaya could see the burn mark left on Minjoon's neck. Gazing at that burn mark, Kaya slowly started to speak.

"I am being completely innocent and pure as I'm saying this. So take it as a little boy would."

".....What is it?"

"Your promise to take care of me, please keep it. I have a cold right now."

“Sure. But what does this have to do with innocent and pure?”

“I want someone to be with me until the moment I meet my dad. No, I want you to be by my side.”

Kaya continued to speak.

“.....Tonight, will you stay with me?”

Chapter 173: Overlapping Shadows (4)

He finally understood why Kaya told him to innocently and purely listen. Even though she said to do so, he couldn't help himself from having improper thoughts. Jo Minjoon stared at Kaya with a blank expression before slowly starting to speak.

“.....Am I supposed to interpret that like a teenager in puberty?”

“No. Take the puberty out of it.”

“Even before puberty, boys normally.....”

Kaya's expression started to get colder. As if saying he understood, Minjoon just started to crush a poor french fry with his fingers with a sad expression. Kaya pushed him to hurry up and make up his mind.

“So what will it be. Will you stay with me or not?”

“Hold on.”

Jo Minjoon took out his smartphone. He then immediately sent Rachel a text. [Me: I'm not coming home tonight.] Kaya started to shake her head.

“Are you a kid? Why do you have to report your every move?”

“She might be worried if I don't contact her and stay out. What about you? Are you going to contact your mom?”

“..... I don't know. Later. If I call her now, I don't know what to tell her.”

“Did you say Ms. Grace was still in New York?”

“She lived a rough life, but she spent half of her whole life in New York. I do want to take her away from the rough East and bring her here to California.....but I will have to wait and see.”

“What about you? Are you going to keep living in California?”

Kaya hesitated for a moment. Nothing had been decided yet and

she couldn't answer. However, the fact that she could leave California meant that she would have to leave Minjoon again in the near future. She didn't want to say that.

For Minjoon's feelings, for her own feelings. If it is an uncertain farewell, she didn't want to bring it up if she didn't have to do so.

"I will live in California for at least the next six months. Of course I would be traveling here and there frequently, but since they said they'll pay the rent, I might as well find a house.....but why are we suddenly talking about this?"

"Then shall we talk about the night we will be spending together?"

"Don't say it like that. I told you to become innocent."

"What? All I said was the night. Isn't it your ear that is not innocent?"

".....The nuance was completely weird."

As Kaya said that, she grabbed a handful of fries. As he was wondering whether she was going to eat all of it, Kaya quickly grabbed Minjoon's back with her other hand and reached out her hand full of fries.

"Open your mouth."

"I don't, ah!"

He was planning on saying he didn't want to, but now that he thought about it, he had to open his mouth to respond. Kaya shoved all those fries into Minjoon's mouth and spoke with a triumphant voice.

"Swallow that puberty stricken teenager inside of you along with those fries."

He had a ton of things he wanted to say, but he could not say anything. It wasn't only because of the french fries. Kaya's face was right in front of his nose. She opened her mouth. Her lips

approached slowly and bit one of the french fries that was sticking out of Minjoon's mouth. Her head started to turn, and the sound of her teeth biting the french fry felt like it was echoing in his ear.

“The puberty stricken teenage girl inside of me, I will swallow her with this as well.”

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Kaya did not have a house in California yet. That meant that she was currently staying at a hotel. That also meant that the place the two of them would have to spend the night together was none other than a hotel.

It wasn't weird for the atmosphere to become awkward. A man and a woman entering a hotel together. They both knew what that usually meant... Kaya planted her butt on the couch and started to speak.

“.....The female worker at the counter, didn't she look like she recognize us?”

“If she didn't recognize us, I'm sure she wouldn't have given us such a sparkling gaze.”

“Oh my gosh.....what do I do if they post it on the internet? Do I need to sue them?”

“If you're worried about that, you'll first need to take care of all those people at the hot dog shop that took pictures of us.”

Kaya hugged her knees with a depressed expression at Minjoon's words. Her tight skinny jeans looked like they would burst. Jo Minjoon suddenly felt awkward and turned his gaze away. Kaya started to mumble.

“That person.....do you think he saw it too.”

He didn't even need to ask who that person was. Jo Minjoon quietly answered.

“I'm not sure. What I can be sure about is that that person

probably looked up all videos related to you and Grand Chef. Maybe they even encouraged that Tess Gilly to speak up.”

“.....Now that I think about it, it’s very weird. The person who told me that person was looking for me was Gilly. The only person Gilly could have gotten that information from is that reporter. But why does it have to be that woman? She used to post those nasty posts about me.”

“I don’t know. Ask him yourself. You’ll meet him tomorrow.”

“If he cares enough to get on a plane and fly to LA that is.”

At that moment, her phone started to ring. It was a message from her agent. Kaya had a scared expression on her face as she looked towards Minjoon.

“.....Will it be a text saying he’s not coming?”

“Don’t worry about it and just open it.”

Kaya unlocked her phone with shaky hands. Her anxious gaze read through the screen and then she let out a sigh as she leaned against the couch.

“He doesn’t need a plane. Apparently he lives in Orange County.”

“Pretty much next door. That’s great. If it goes well.....you could see him pretty often.”

“Why do you keep talking like I will forgive him?”

“If your dad had a good enough reason for what he did, I’m sure you will forgive him. You prefer to like people than to hate people. Plus, I’m sure your dad had a reason for what he did. No, I hope that he did. That is the only way for you to understand him. That is the only way that you will get a dad.”

“.....I don’t need something like a dad.”

Kaya spoke in a slightly angry tone. The thing that made her the most angry was the fact that she knew better than anybody that what she had just said was a lie. This was the person she thought

about many times since she was young. Her dad, he was someone she believed was watching over her from somewhere she could not see.

Because she thought it might hurt Grace, she never expressed her feelings, but the word 'dad' held a deep meaning that echoed in her heart. That was why she couldn't help but to hate him more. Someone that special, someone who should be that special never showed his face in front of her mom or her for twenty years.

It was at that moment. Jo Minjoon came next to Kaya and quietly put his arm around her shoulder. Kaya turned her head and looked up at Jo Minjoon's face. She started to speak while scrunching her lips.

"Didn't I tell you to get rid of the teenager going through puberty?"

"If I was a teenager going through puberty, I would not have been satisfied with just your shoulder."

"..... Pervert."

Although she was giving him a look, she slowly leaned her head on Minjoon's shoulder. Kaya then started to speak.

"Practice with me."

"Practice?"

"For when I meet that person. You pretend to be him."

Kaya moved herself away as she said that. As Jo Minjoon started to look at her with a slightly confused expression, Kaya's eyes became fierce as she started to speak.

"Who do you think you are?"

".....What?"

"You really thought that I would be happy to see you after all these years just because your blood runs through my veins?"

“How am I supposed to respond? I’m not confident in my method acting skills.”

“.....Minjoon. Just don’t say anything. You’re taking me out of the zone.”

“Your dad won’t just sit there without saying anything.”

“I need to do this so that I won’t shake tomorrow to say everything that’s on my mind.”

“Then you have to come at him a little more gently. If you get angry like that, it makes you look more nervous. You want to show him your confident self.”

Kaya started to take some deep breaths after hearing Minjoon speak. As he mentioned, she didn’t want to show a shabby appearance. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya and asked a question.

“Thank you.”

“.....For what?”

“For not suffering on your own and looking for me. But what made you change? I thought you weren’t going to rely on me.”

“I don’t want to rely on you. Plus, right now, I’m not relying on you.”

“Then?”

Kaya made eye contact with Jo Minjoon. A dark blue set of eyes. Normally, it is a color that would just be filled with coldness, but Minjoon could feel the warmth inside those blue eyes of hers.

“I’m going through it together with you. It is a very important moment in my life and I wanted to do it together with you.”

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Kaya continued to practice the interaction with Jo Minjoon late into the night. Jo Minjoon didn’t know how useful the practice would be, but he just continued to do it with her.

Of course the two of them didn't spend the whole night like that. After saying let's rest a bit, they leaned against the couch and closed their eyes.....when he opened his eyes, Jo Minjoon could see the sunlight that was starting to reach their feet. Jo Minjoon turned his head. Maybe it was because it was cold, but Kaya was sound asleep, curled up against his chest like a baby bird.

“.....I thought she didn't want to spread her cold.”

At this rate, the virus wouldn't just come over to play, it would have built a whole house in his body. Jo Minjoon carefully carried Kaya and laid her down on the bed and covered her with a blanket. Kaya squirmed like a baby bear and pulled the blanket up. Seeing her acting like that, Minjoon couldn't help but smile.

He wanted to just stand there and stare at her sleeping face, but he couldn't do that. Jo Minjoon started to head towards the kitchen. After taking a look in the fridge, Jo Minjoon started to have some concerns. Normally, he would cook some porridge, but Kaya was not Korean. After worrying about what Westerners eat when they were sick, Jo Minjoon took out his smartphone. The screen that said it was 5:43am could not stop him. He pressed the call button. After ringing a few times, a sleepy and grumpy voice answered the phone.

[.....What the hell. It's not even 6am. Did something happen?]

“It's very urgent. Wake up and listen.”

[Why are you serious? Did something really happen?]

At Minjoon's stiff voice, Anderson's mind cleared up very quickly and he started to nervously speak as well. Jo Minjoon laughed as he started to speak.

“What do you eat for breakfast when you are sick?”

[.....What?]

“Kaya is sick. She says it's a cold. She has something important to do today so she needs to have a lot of energy.....”

[Hold on. You're telling me that you woke up me this early because of that stupid girl?]

"We're chefs. If someone is sick, we need to make them food that will energize them.

[Isn't this one crazy bastard.....]

As if he didn't even have the energy to get angry, a weak voice came from the other side. He could pretty much imagine the expression Anderson had right now. Jo Minjoon smiled as he started to speak again.

"I'm sorry. Please help me this once."

[.....Chicken noodle soup. There. Now disappear. I'm going back to bed.]

"Thank you. Love you, friend."

[Ah.....please. Please? Pretty please. I'm begging you. Disappear from my morning.]

"Good night." (TL: Let's not lie. He wanted Anderson to know he spent the night with Kaya. He could have just googled to get the answer...) Jo Minjoon was smiling brightly as he ended the call. After hanging up, he realized that it was a problem he could have searched on the internet for an answer, but he didn't care.

He easily found a recipe online. Jo Minjoon put on his jacket as he left the hotel. He thought about asking the hotel kitchen to make it, but if possible, he wanted to make it for her with his own hands. A chef was someone who could do that.

When he came back from the nearby mart with the ingredients, Kaya was still sleeping. She must have been really tired. Getting a good rest was not bad. If he was going to properly make a broth, he needed around two hours anyways.

It takes a long time, but the process itself wasn't complicated or difficult. Remove the innards of the chicken and boil it with celery,

carrots, onions, garlic, and turnips. After you let it boil for a bit, add some thyme and bay leaves and black pepper.

After that, it was time to be patient as always. For over an hour, Jo Minjoon removed the impurities that started to float up. After the broth has settled long enough, he took the chicken out and removed the meat from the bones.

After that, he removed all of the veggies and herbs from the broth. He then put olive oil on a pan before frying the onion, garlic, carrot, celery, thyme and bay leaves. He had to make sure the veggies were soft but not caramelizing. His mind was pretty tired after grocery shopping and cooking for hours like this on an empty stomach, but he didn't hate this process that much.

After frying the ingredients like that, you pour the broth over it. Once it was about to boil again, Minjoon threw in the pasta. Wide egg noodles. It looked similar to a fusilli, but this egg noodle was not as twisted. After boiling the egg noodles for about five minutes, put in the chicken meat you removed earlier and let it boil for two more minutes to finish the process. A message popped up saying it was a 7 point dish, but he was satisfied. It was home cooking full of care. It had been a while since he cooked like this.

“Kaya. Wake up.”

“.....Hmm. What. What time is it.”

“Around 8am.”

“Can't I sleep just a little bit longer?”

“No. I made you chicken noodle soup. Come eat.”

“Hmm. It smells good.....can't you bring it to me? I'm a patient.”

Jo Minjoon did not respond and just continued to stare at Kaya. He slowly started to speak.

“Your face is completely swollen.”

“Mm.Hmm? Ah, no! Close your eyes!”

“I already saw everything.”

Kaya wrapped her face with the blanket and just lifted her eyes out of it as she looked towards Minjoon grudgingly.

Minjoon started to laugh as he continued on.

“Your eyes are swollen too.”

In the end, Kaya went to the sink to wash her face, put on lotion and skin before finally appearing in front of Minjoon. Jo Minjoon started to speak in a disappointed voice.

“The noodles will get soggy.”

“.....Thank you. Starting with the breakfast.”

“Eat first before your thanks and morning greetings.”

Kaya lifted up her spoon. After taking a sip of the soup, there was a bright smile on her face.

“It’s great having someone to make me delicious soup like this.”

“Does it make you feel better?”

“Don’t rush it. What kind of soup gives you strength after one bite.”

“Well since you can talk like that, I guess you have some energy.”

Jo Minjoon laughed as he put the soup in his mouth. He was the one who made it, but it tasted good. After taking a few sips, Jo Minjoon started to ask a question. There was something he wanted to ask Kaya.

“Hey. Later, when we go meet your dad.....”

“Yeah.”

“How should I introduce myself?”

He wasn’t sure exactly how to introduce himself. Kaya made eye contact with the soup as she started to respond.

“A friend who goes to a hotel with me. A friend who makes me soup in the morning. I guess that’s pretty good.”

“.....I think he’ll have a bad impression of me.”

“Then should I resolve it very clearly?”

Kaya slowly lifted up her head. Maybe it was because she didn’t have her makeup on, but her double eyelids and her sleek eyebrows looked prettier than usual. She opened her mouth and her voice started to jump out. Her voice still sounded like she was sleepy and sick.....but he clearly heard the content of her words.

“My boyfriend, whom I love very much. How’sthat?”

Chapter 174: Overlapping Shadows (5)

The spoon was stuck in the soup without moving. Jo Minjoon's hands and eyes were shaking. He looked at Kaya while still shaking. Kaya avoided his gaze for a bit before developing the courage to look him in the eye. Kaya started to speak.

"I told you. When we meet again, there is something I want to tell you."

".....I didn't expect it to be so sudden."

"I hope you aren't thinking something like the man is supposed to be the one to confess. If you plan on saying something out of style and old-fashioned like that, don't. Or I will kick you in the shins."

Kaya said that while starting to play footsie with him underneath the dining table. It was the moment her foot, which was surrounded by her high heels, slid by his shin. Kaya started to frown.

"Your leg hair feels weird."

"I don't think you should be saying such a thing in the current atmosphere. And me too....."

"Wait."

At Jo Minjoon's serious face, Kaya stretched her finger forward to stop him from talking. Kaya started to speak after pulling and then letting go of his lips.

"If what you are trying to say right now is a response to what I just said, you will need to think hard about it. It is a moment that will remain forever in my life. If the content is just average, I won't forgive you."

".....You expect me to come up with something marvelous right now?"

“Yes. It is your homework. Since you said it, figure it out. However, your time limit is today. If you don’t before the end of the day

Kaya’s foot once again touched Jo Minjoon’s shin. Kaya had a seductive smile on her face as she continued.

“I will punish you.”

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“Don’t I look weird?”

“I told you, you look pretty.”

“I don’t want to look pretty. I want to look confident and cool. Not like a kid, not shabby, and somewhat smart.”

Kaya spoke as she looked into the mirror. She was wearing a suit she would not normally wear. Black pants with a thin white dress shirt, and on top of that, a black jacket. Kaya looked towards the coordinator next to her with a worried expression.

“Is this too much? Is the one piece from earlier better?”

“Kaya, like I said. No matter what you wear, your dad will look at you fondly. In the first place, why does the clothes matter? The fact that you are going to meet him is what matters.”

“Doesn’t seem like something the coordinator should be saying.”

“I don’t know. Even a coordinator might say such a thing after you change your outfit ten times.”

The coordinator, Marilyn, sighed as she spoke. Jo Minjoon looked towards her with an apologetic expression.

“I’m sorry for calling you for a personal issue.....”

Kaya’s personal life is work to me. You don’t need to worry about it. Let Kaya worry by herself for a bit. Let’s take care of you first, Minjoon-ssi. You can’t go wearing that outfit.”

Jo Minjoon was wearing a t-shirt and shorts. Although he wasn’t

heading to a matchmaker or anything like that, it was not appropriate attire to go meet Kaya's biological father. Marilyn handed a white t-shirt with a casual beige sport coat and nodded her head.

"Rather than looking too stiff, this semi-formal outfit should be better. I'm sure he is very nervous as well."

"Thank you. But you even have men's clothing."

"I stole Kaya's agent's clothes. Thankfully, the two of you are the same size."

It was hard to determine whether she was joking or not. Jo Minjoon smiled awkwardly before taking the clothes and heading into the room. When he came out after changing, Kaya must have decided to go with the formal outfit in the end. Her curly hair that was let down was flowing against her shoulders and back, and her makeup was clean and neat. Her smokey makeup that she was extremely stubborn about was not there today. She was wearing a mask, but it fit her really well, as if she was wearing it for fashion. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly as he spoke.

"You look pretty."

"I know."

Kaya answered as if that was obvious and started to exit the room. He was worried since they didn't have a car, but it was a useless worry. Before they could head out of the hotel, a van gently stopped in front of them.

"Get in. Kaya, Minjoon. I will take you there."

"What's going on? You're acting very nice."

"I am always nice."

".....I won't say anything today. Just talking makes me lose energy."

She must be very nervous about the approaching meeting. On

their way to the arranged meeting location, Kaya held on tightly to Minjoon's hand without letting go. Kaya asked in a nervous voice.

“What was I planning on saying first? Who do you think you are? No, that was the second line. Don't think I came here because I wanted to see you. That was it.But I think that is a bit weird. Doesn't it sound like I am actually saying I came here because I wanted to see him?”

“Just say whatever you want, Kaya.”

“I'm not much a talker. I already told you. If I just say whatever is on my mind, I will end up stumbling on my words. I don't want to show him that I can't even speak correctly.”

“You're pretty even if you stumble on your words. I'm sure you'll seem that way in your dad's eyes too.”

As soon as Jo Minjoon finished talking, they heard a weird coughing noise from the driver's seat. Agent Jang could not stop coughing for a while, as if he had spit in his nose. Kaya glared at him before asking.

“What. What is the problem?”

“Nothing. Martin told me the two of you were extremely cheesy, but I didn't know it would be this much.”

“Don't make fun of my potential boyfriend. I'll get angry.”

“Potential boyfriend? What kind of ambiguous relationship is that? Potential husband maybe.”

“Since Minjoon has yet to respond to my confession, I can't call him my boyfriend just yet. And potential husband isn't bad either. Since I plan on marrying Minjoon.”

Hearing that, it was Minjoon who coughed this time. It was louder and longer than Jang's cough. At the end of his cough, Kaya glared at him as she asked.

“Why are you so surprised?”

“.....You, it’s because you keep saying unexpected things.”

“Why is it unexpected? You are dating me without thinking about marriage?”

“That’s not what I’m saying

“I will marry you. I told you. Korea is dangerous. I even posted a question online. Many people think it is safe in korea, but the reality is that it is really dangerous. Just live in the US with me.”

Jo Minjoon’s face turned red as he just opened and closed his mouth. Just thinking about what Jang’s face would be like in the driver’s seat made him feel really hot. At that moment, the car stopped. Jang looked back and started to speak.

“Time to get out. We are here.”

“Jang, you’re not coming too, are you?”

“Why would I go there? Have fun.”

As Jo Minjoon got out of the car, he started to speak.

“Jang seems like a nice person.”

“Nice person my ass. He does whatever he can to make me work even a little more. Terrible.....”

Kaya stopped talking. Her two eyes headed towards the side of the street and stopped moving. It was almost as if time had stopped. Jo Minjoon followed after Kaya’s gaze. Kaya was looking at a large luxury sedan down the street.

Seeing the white man open the door and get out, Jo Minjoon realized it. He was Kaya’s father. He had the same black hair and blue eyes. The thing that made him the most nervous was

‘Just the atmosphere around him feels luxurious.’

It wasn’t just the car or the clothes he was wearing. He himself seemed to be giving off a fancy vibe. It seemed normal for Kaya to be nervous. Orange County. Hearing that he was living in that

fancy neighborhood, she knew he didn't have a difficult life but she didn't expect he would appear as such a fancy looking individual.

That was also not the only reason Kaya was anxious. She expected that she would meet her father once she went inside the cafe. She never even thought about coincidentally meeting outside like this.

Kaya's father, Bruce Croft, was also anxious. He hesitated for a bit before heading towards Kaya and opening up his arms. Kaya stepped backwards before fiercely opening her eyes.

"Don't come here."

".....I'm sorry."

"Don't even pretend to be sorry. Let's go in. I have no thoughts of giving you a hug. I didn't come here for such a thing."

She was pretending to be tough as she talked, but Jo Minjoon could feel the shaking in the hand he was holding. Was it because she was angry, or because she was scared? All he could do for her right now was to tightly hold her hand.

Even after entering the cafe, the two could not easily start talking. Jo Minjoon debated for a bit whether he should start the conversation. But if he tried to make it less awkward when they haven't even unraveled the old score they had, it might make Kaya's mind more of a mess.

In the end, the first to talk was Bruce. He slowly started to speak.

"You look similar to your younger sister."

".....That is what you have to say after meeting your daughter for the first time after 20, no 18 years? You look like your younger sister? Are you trying to emphasize the fact that I am related to you by blood?"

"I'm sorry. I understand your anger as well. I practiced what to

say to you many timesbut actually seeing you like this, I only seem to be able to say stupid stuff.

It definitely didn't feel fake. Each and every one of his words seemed to be full of sorrow that even Jo Minjoon, who he was not directing the words to, was starting to feel sad. Of course Kaya also felt that way. But she hated it. She wanted him to be someone terrible. Since he left her alone for the last 18 years, she wanted him to be someone she wouldn't feel bad about pouring out all of the grudges she had in her heart.....

Would she really be happy if that was the case?

She could not answer that question. As she placed that frustration into her voice, her voice naturally started to get louder.

“Why did you disappear? Why were you not by our side? I really thought you would not be much of a person. But I was wrong. The person in front of me would seem like a successful CEO no matter who is looking at him.”

“Do you know how our family lived without you? Everyday, mom was sad because her health was getting worse, and I had to spend every day watching my mom be that way. When my friends were holding hands with their dads and having fun, I lived while picking out spoiled fruit.”

“How could you do that? Your daughter. Your family. How could you throw them away?”

Maybe it was a good thing that she had a cold. If not, she might have been screaming at the top of her lungs. The thing that made her the most angry though.....

“At that time, I was being chased by my debts. Rather than protecting you and your mother, I would only have hurt you more. I hope you don't take this as an excuse. I know I am a terrible father. It was because I was lacking that I made you grow up without a dad. I know nothing can defend that decision.”

“But I never threw you away. I always thought about and missed you. I promised myself that I would go look for you once I was successful, and worked hard like my life depended on it. However.....looking back at it now, I guess that was also a selfish thought process.”

The thing that made her the most angry was that all of Bruce’s answers seemed very mature and that each of his situations had reasons you had to accept.

She hated it. She wanted to shout more. She wanted to be more angry. However, Bruce was a much better person than she imagined for her to do that.

“How hard your mom must have worked, I can understand by meeting you. You grew up really well. That makes me feel even more sorry. I’m sorry I could not be by your side. I’m sorry for making you live without knowing who your dad is.”

But Kaya’s gaze did not get any softer. She could not let it become gentle. For 18 years, she lived while longing for her dad she never got to meet. She thought about him, and she loved the dad in her mind. Maybe that was why she was feeling more hurt and more upset. At that moment, Kaya was really thankful for the mask on her face. The mask will help hide her terrible facial expression.

Kaya’s baptism of questions did not end there. She repeated the same questions at times, and also brought up the sorrow she had for not being able to take part in parent-children activities that she couldn’t even remember. As for Bruce, he only had responses for everything that made you think he was a good person.

Bruce was a good person. Better than she thought he would be. Jo Minjoon hugged Kaya’s shoulder as he started to speak.

“Kaya. Calm your heart and see the person in front of you. At least in my eyes, your dad is a good person. Even better than I hoped for.”

“.....Whose side are you really on?”

“Of course I’m on your side. Right now, I’m saying this as someone on your side. It is hard to hate someone. Your father..... let’s understand where he is coming from.”

Truthfully speaking, by the time Jo Minjoon said that, Kaya had already accepted him. Although Bruce was not a good dad, he wasn’t a bad person. And she understood his situation.

Kaya lowered the mask from her mouth. To Bruce, that action made it seem like Kaya was lowering the wall that was between the two of them.

“.....Fine. I’ll accept it. I’ll try to understand where you are coming from. I’m not saying I can completely forgive youbut I won’t blame you anymore. However, I have a request.”

“Tell me whatever it is. If it is something I can do, I will do anything. What is it?”

“There’s somethingthat I’ve always been envious of. The people going to restaurants. No, families going to restaurants. Mom and my younger sister will come to LA soon. At that time, have dinner with us. With my family I want to have a meal with my family.”

“.....Okay. Let’s do that. I will make sure to be there. Call me whenever.”

To be with Kaya’s mom should be quite a burdensome request for him, but he did not reject it. Kaya stood up from her seat as she spoke.

“Stand up.”

“Hmm? Ah, I’m sorry. I took too much of your time.”

“No, that’s not it. Stand up.”

Bruce stood up with a confused expression on his face. Kaya bit her lips for a second before slowly approaching him and giving him

a hug. As Bruce stood there frozen in shock, Kaya whispered in a quiet voice.

“.....Now I think I can give you a hug, dad.”

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After sending Bruce back, Kaya and Jo Minjoon just quietly sat in the cafe where they shared a conversation with him. They didn't need any special type of conversation. Every so often, Kaya would randomly start laughing, then her nose would turn red and she would start to sniffle, and at times she would cry a bunch as well. Every time that happened, Jo Minjoon patted her shoulder and held her hand. After a long while, Kaya opened her mouth.

“.....Thank you. For being here.”

“I'm your boyfriend.”

“You haven't completed my homework yet. You are just a potential. Potential.”

“That homework. If it is right now, I think I can take care of it.”

At those words, Kaya looked towards Jo Minjoon. Her red eyes and nose. It was a face that you just wanted to hug. She sniffled before asking.

“Are you confident? You need to prepare a marvelous response.”

“The foundation for a speech is the heart.”

“Then try me. If the quality is good, I'll remove the potential tag.”

Jo Minjoon smiled before focusing on Kaya. At his gaze, Kaya rolled her eyes as if she was nervous, but she quickly looked back at Minjoon with a stubborn gaze, as if she did not want to avoid his gaze.

It was at that moment. Jo Minjoon slowly leaned his head in. Kaya nervously lifted up the mask from underneath her lips and shook her head.

“No. I think I know what you are about to do, but no. You’ll catch the

Kaya did not say anything else. Jo Minjoon had stealthily placed his lips on top of the mask. Their hot breaths revolved around the thin piece of fabric. That piece of fabric was between them, but that soft feeling of each other’s lips actually felt really clear.

Kaya’s eyes turned extremely round and were shaking like those of a shocked rabbit. Jo Minjoon lifted up his hand and caressed Kaya’s face. Her mask was lowered, and their breaths warmed each other’s lips. Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“I’ve already caught the cold.”

Their shadowscame together and overlapped.”

Chapter 175: The Person Who Showed Up on a Truck (1)

“Good work today, Chloe.”

“Ah, thank you for your hard work as well.”

Chloe looked back at the PD and smiled brightly. The PD admired her expression for a while. After working together for long periods of time, your mind is likely to let loose a bit. Once you get used to the faces of the people you are working with, it was normal for the expressions to become almost stoic.

But Chloe was not like that. From the moment they scouted her until now, she was always nice and respectful. The PD’s voice naturally ended up extremely gentle as well.

“How are you doing lately? Isn’t it difficult to be filming?”

“Compared to you and the rest of the staff, it is nothing. All I have to do is cook like I always do and just read the script.”

“If it ever gets too hard, let us know. We will do what we can to help you out.”

“Please continue to take good care of me.”

Chloe gently smiled. She then slowly headed out of the studio.

On her way out, every staff member Chloe ran into smiled brightly and greeted her. Among them, many of the men even asked if Chloe was available for dinner, but as usual, Chloe just responded with an apologetic smile.

Even after leaving the studio, peace did not come easily. Surprisingly, Chloe was a popular star. If you looked only at the numbers, she might even have more fans than Kaya or Jo Minjoon. At least among the housewives that is.

Unlike Grand Chef which was full of complicated and difficult

dishes most normal people wouldn't dare to attempt, Chloe's current program, Recipe Pro, focused on recipes that were easy to follow at home. It was to the point where the majority of housewives would search the internet for 'Chloe Jung recipe' as they were deciding on their dinner menus.

Thanks to that, many of the people she ran into while walking would request a picture with her or ask for her signature. Maybe that was why, but Chloe did not look good as she walked across the parking lot. Her agent who had been standing next to her asked in a concerned voice.

"Chloe, are you okay? If it's too hard, should I push back your other meetings for today?"

"I know those aren't available to be rescheduled. Don't worry. If I sleep a bit in the car, I should be better."

".....I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry. It's my job."

Chloe strained herself to smile for her agent. It was a smile that seemed to be a bit weak. After that, Chloe took out her smartphone. The agent didn't know what else to say, and just continued to walk with her.

But it was at that moment. Chloe suddenly stopped. Her agent could only look at her in confusion. Chloe looked like a frozen person as she just continued to stare at her phone. Her agent started to speak.

"Chloe, is everything okay?"

Chloe lifted her head. The expression that Chloe made at that moment, the agent knew that he would never forget that expression in his life. He then lamented the fact that he wasn't an artist. If he could paint the expression that Chloe just showed, that picture would definitely be a masterpiece that will remain in history.

Chloe responded.

“I want to respond that something did.....”

Her voice sounded like she was about to cry.

“But now, ithas nothing to do with me.”

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“.....Looks like they decided to go all out now. Extremely all out.”

Rose Island. Hall. Anderson looked at his smartphone with a disgusted expression. On his phone was a picture of Kaya and Jo Minjoon. Of course if it was just that, there were plenty of pictures of the two of them on the internet, but these were special.

“Hamburger kiss, French fry kiss, and now even mask kiss..... what kind of movie were they filming the last two days?”

“..... I hate movies.”

Ella mumbled in a sad voice as her eyes started to turn red. Anderson used his finger to get Ella’s hair out of her face.

“Me too.”

“I’m sure Santa Claus won’t give any presents to any movie directors. Right?”

“No. I’m sure they’ll get more than most people.”

“..... sob sob.”

Ella started to sob as she laid down on top of the desk. Janet who had been watching from the side looked at Anderson as if saying what are you doing to a kid, but Anderson didn’t care and just shrugged his shoulders.

Kaya and Minjoon’s pictures started to be uploaded since yesterday. For someone with Kaya’s level of popularity, having paparazzis around all the time was unavoidable..... but the fact that they were showing multiple displays of affection in public

places like cafes or restaurants without even caring about the paparazzis made the story bigger. Their pictures were even on the phones of regular citizens as well.

The pictures weren't the only things to spread. The fact that Kaya met with her biological father also instantly started being uploaded through articles. The first article came from.....

“Jessica Prada.”

It was the woman who broke the story about the Tess Gilly incident. How she even managed to get a hold of the story and managed to so quickly post an article.....

As usual, Jessica Prada managed to twist the details in a way that would make for good gossip. After living without a peep for 18 years, her father showed up once Kaya became famous. Unlike Kaya, he was wealthy, and Kaya treated her biological father with a fierce attitude.....

Of course Kaya's agent posted an official statement soon after. The content of it was something like this. He did show up after Kaya became famous, but the time he happened to be looking for her just ended up overlapping with the time Grand Chef broadcasted. It was only recently that he became wealthy, and Kaya understood the situation her father was in.

At first glance it might seem like quite a severe situation, but Anderson did not worry much about Kaya. It wasn't because of the 'love-hate' relationship he had with her. It was because Minjoon was by her side. He believed that Minjoon would be taking perfect care of her to the point she wouldn't even have time to worry.

There was actually someone else he was worried about.

‘.....Is she suffering on her own right now?’

He suddenly started to sigh. As he was about to remove the last of the sigh from his lungs, the door opened and Jo Minjoon entered the hall with a casual expression. The demi chefs, prep cooks,

apprentice Justin and Ella, and even Lisa and the bakers all looked towards Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon couldn't help but flinch and stop because of this baptism of gazes.

“.....Why are you all looking at me like that?”

“Uncle!”

Ella jumped off the chair and ran towards him as fast as she could with her short legs. She stopped right in front of him and opened her arms. Jo Minjoon quickly peeked towards Lisa, and seeing her nod her head, he cautiously lifted Ella up. Ella put her face in Minjoon's neck before puffing up her cheeks like two dumplings.

“Uncle, you're not going to leave once you get married, are you?”

“Hmm? Why would I leave?”

“But you are getting married?”

“I don't know. At least I don't think I'll get married right now.”

“Then you'll continue to stay with Ella?”

“Yes. So don't worry about it.”

Seeing Minjoon gently console Ella, Javier spoke with admiration.

“Minjoon really seems to be popular with the ladies.”

“Why are you saying that while looking at me?”

“Nothing. I was just wondering if you liked him too.”

“.....The only emotion I need to bring into the kitchen is my competitiveness.”

“Not a very welcoming answer since it's clear that we are both aiming for appetizers.”

Janet looked at Javier with indifference. Javier went ack! before closing off his shoulders.

“I'm sorry. Please don't look at me like that.”

“I just looked at you normally. Since my eyes are slanted, I guess it could seem like I am glaring at you.”

“Ay. What do you mean slanted.....I guess they are slanted.”

Janet’s gaze was fierce. Javier spoke with admiration.

“Oh, this time, it really looked like you were glaring at me.”

Janet answered in a cold voice.

“This time, I really was glaring at you.”

“.....Ah.”

Javier just scratched his head looking like an idiot.

Jo Minjoon and Anderson came face to face a bit later. Once the weird atmosphere died down a bit, Anderson asked in a stoic tone.

“So things were taken care of then?”

Remembering that Ella was still in his arms, Jo Minjoon quietly answered. Ella was in a similar situation as Kaya. He didn’t want to casually throw out the word ‘dad’ in front of her.

“I’m sure she still hasn’t healed all the pain in her heart. It’s been quite a long time.....since they last met.”

“Who haven’t you see for a long time?”

“Nothing. Someone Ella doesn’t know.”

“Is it someone important to them?”

“.....I suppose so.”

“It must hurt.”

Ella mumbled in a quiet voice. Jo Minjoon sat Ella down on his lap before looking at her. Ella looked back with her round eyes wide open.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“.....No reason. You just answered like an adult.”

“If you don’t see someone for a long time, it hurts. I hurt sometimes too. I want to see my daddy.”

Ella mumbled in a teary voice before cautiously looking towards the kitchen. On one side, Lisa was busy discussing a new cake recipe with her assistant bakers. Even if she spoke normally, Lisa probably couldn’t hear it, but maybe she felt guilty, Ella continued to whisper in a quiet voice.

“Don’t tell my mommy. She’ll be sad if she hears it.”

“Okay. I won’t tell her.”

“Heehee, thank you.”

Jo Minjoon lifted Ella back up. Because she was such a lovable child, her innocence made him feel even more sorry for her. Seeing Ella like that, Anderson felt like he could understand what Minjoon was saying. Can’t heal all the pain in your heart. The thing that made a child unable to act like a kid andpay attention to her mother’s heart.

Anderson let out a sigh before changing topics. If it is a conversation that’ll just give you a heavy heart, there was no reason to hold on to it.

“Now that I think about it, you wouldn’t know about this. While you were gone, Teacher Rachel left us an announcement before she left.”

“Announcement? What was it?”

Anderson answered.

“A sous chef is coming tomorrow.”

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Next day. 10am. Everybody, including the demi chefs, were gathered in the hall. The reason was simple. They were there to greet the sous chef who should be arriving with Rachel soon. But it wasn’t like they had a welcome card or pamphlet or anything.

They didn't feel the need to do something so troublesome, and even if they wanted to, they couldn't do it because they didn't know the identity of the person.

“.....Even Chef Rachel has a mean side.”

Janet spoke as if she was a bit tired. Jo Minjoon nodded his head as if saying he agreed with her.

“I think teacher has been influenced by Martin too much.”

“Martin..... you mean the PD you mentioned before?”

“Yes. He liked to keep people in suspense like this.”

“Who do you two think will show up?”

Javier asked. Neither of them could immediately answer him. It wasn't like they knew about all of the sous chefs throughout the country. Maybe Javier realized his mistake, but he started to speak again.

“I guess I asked the wrong question. What kind of person do you think will show up? Their experience level or expertise.”

“We can at least say for sure that they won't be someone from a hotel.”

Jo Minjoon answered without any hesitation. Javier nodded his head. Other than successful owner-chefs, hotels were where chefs could make the most money. If a Hotel Chef was to leave a hotel, it would be to open their own restaurant, not to be a sous chef at a different restaurant.

Of course when talking about someone like Rachel who has a lot of fame, even if they were to come as a sous chef, there were probably enough people thinking about doing it to learn the know how from her. But there was no way Rachel would accept people like that. She needed someone who would properly work for her restaurant. Javier scratched his head as he started to mumble.

“Most of Teacher Rachel's disciples are head chefs now so there is

no way they would come here as a sous chef.....”

“Won’t she just bring a sous chef who is working somewhere else? Or maybe she’s bringing a sous chef from one of the branch locations.”

“I’m not so sure about that. Then that restaurant would be missing a sous chef instead.”

At Janet’s answer, Minjoon just shorted interjected. Janet just shrugged her shoulder and didn’t say anything else. At that moment, Anderson finally started to speak.

“Freelancer.”

“.....Freelancer?”

“For example, if it is a head chef who failed and ruined their own restaurant, most owners would not want to make a contract with them. They have the skills, but have nowhere to go. Then they might be cast as a sous chef here. I’ve seen many people we know stay at our restaurant for a few months at a time while I was growing up.”

“I don’t know. That’s the same story in the end. Would someone like want to to continue to stay at this restaurant? They would want to be a head chef again.”

In the end, they couldn’t come to a conclusion. They all just quieted down and looked at the clock. Suddenly, they heard a weird engine noise coming from the front of the restaurant. What they saw through the window was a pink ice cream truck. Jo Minjoon started to speak in a ‘there is no way’ type of tone.

“There’s no way they’re planning to start selling over there right.....?”

It was actually pretty common. While Rose Island was closed, many food trucks planted themselves in front of the store to sell food to the tourists who came to see Rose Island. However, it was something that cannot be allowed anymore. Once they reopened,

they had to prevent food trucks from being parked directly in front of the restaurant. It was then that Justin started to speak.

“Ice cream! Sounds good. Should I go buy some?”

Jo Minjoon quietly stared at Justin. Justin finally realized it and started to speak with an embarrassed look on his face.

“Ah, I’ll go tell him he can’t sell stuff here.”

“No, wait.”

Jo Minjoon stopped Justin and headed toward the window. Ella was stuck to the window, blankly looking at the text written on the ice cream truck. Jo Minjoon smiled while asking.

“It’s kind of rude to just send them away, why don’t we at least buy some ice cream before sending them away? Ella. Do you want to eat ice cream?”

“Uh..... uh.....”

Ella took a peek towards Lisa. Lisa let out a sigh and shook her head no.

“Minjoon. Ella’s teeth will rot.”

“.....I guess not. Ella. Your mom said no.”

“Okay.....”

Ella lowered her head with a disappointed expression. Jo Minjoon looked back and forth at Ella and Lisa. Seeing him like that, Lisa had no other choice but to give up. For him to like Ella so much when she wasn’t even his own kid, Lisa didn’t hate that feeling. Lisa spoke in a stern tone to Ella.

“Ella. Once you eat ice cream, you have to brush your teeth right away. Got it?”

“Yes! I even brought my strawberry flavored toothpaste!”

Ella smiled brightly as she answered. Jo Minjoon held Ella’s hand and started to speak.

“Anybody else want one? Ice cream. My treat.”

“Me. Cookies and Cream.”

“If you want one, come with me.”

“Nevermind then. Too much work. I don’t want to go.”

Anderson leaned his neck on the chair with a grumpy expression.

In the end, the people who headed off on the adventure towards the ice cream truck were Ella and Minjoon, and Janet. Maybe she really liked ice cream. No, maybe she wanted to see Ella’s extremely happy expression after she eats ice cream. Janet surprisingly seemed to care about Ella quite a bit.

Jo Minjoon headed to the front of the ice cream truck. Past the open side door was a red-headed white man who saw them and nodded his head.

“Congratulations. Gentleman and little lady. You two are my first customers today.”

“To add one more thing to it, we’re sorry to say that we also have to be your last customers. I’m sure that you must have heard this place was closed before you came here, but that is no longer the case.”

“I know.”

“Yes. Because of that huh?”

Instead of answering, the man placed a plate with two spoons in front of Jo Minjoon. It looked like the type of spoons used in restaurants for amuse-bouche. There was something that looked like a light green sherbet on the bottom, and in the center of the sherbet was a carbonated cherry.

Jo Minjoon blankly started to mumble.

“Molecular..... gastronomy?”

Chapter 176: The Person Who Showed Up on a Truck (2)

It was perplexing. He had no other choice but to be surprised. Never in his wildest dreams did he expect to see a food truck offering molecular gastronomy food.

It was then that Minjoon noticed the items laid out behind the man. A syringe used to squeeze sauce or fruit juice type of items inside ingredients. A foam maker used to make foam sauce. A rapid freezer called the pacojet, that can grind up any ingredient and turn it into ice cream or cold mousse.

Minjoon's eyes were full of disbelief as he turned back to look at the man. He couldn't fathom just what kind of person this was. The passenger door opened and the person got out of the truck. After taking a look at him Jo Minjoon let out a groan.

“.....What is going on?”

“You're smart. I'm sure you've already figured it out. Am I wrong?”

“I have figured out. But”

“Dericiou.....!”

Jo Minjoon's words were cut off by Ella's tongue-tied exclamation. Jo Minjoon, no, both of them, were looking at Ella. After putting the spoon in her mouth, Ella had a joyful smile on her face. Ella then looked up while sucking on the spoon.

“Can you give me one more of this?”

“Hold on a minute. I will make you a different flavor.”

“Not for me, I want to give it to my mommy. But hmm I do want to try another flavor too.”

Jo Minjoon smiled as he put his spoon in Ella's hand. Ella gasped

and took in a deep breath.

You can take mine to her.”

“Ah, no. Uncle needs to eat it too. It’s really really tasty.”

“I’ll ask him for another one.”

Ella stared at the spoon for a bit as if she was unable to make up her mind before she opened her mouth. “Thank you, uncle.” Watching her walk back with her short legs, Jo Minjoon slowly started to speak.

“Nice to meet you, sous chef. My name is Jo Minjoon.”

“Let’s save the introductions for a little later. I prefer to introduce myself through cooking than speaking.”

To cook ice cream. Something was awkward about it, but Jo Minjoon understood. It was ice cream made using molecular gastronomy. Unless it was someone who was adamantly against molecular gastronomy, there was nobody who could claim this was not cooking.

Another spoon was placed in front of Jo Minjoon. The dish was an 8 point dish. Even if it is molecular gastronomy, it was just sherbet and carbonated cherry. It was easy to wonder how you could get such a high point dish with just these two ingredients, but the moment he put it in his mouth, his thoughts changed completely.

‘Ah.....!’

At first, he thought it was probably mojito or apple ice cream. But what he tasted was completely different than what he expected. First of all, speaking just about the sherbet, it wasn’t that sweet. The texture was soft, but the taste was instead slightly salty. And the taste that was subtle but present was

“Asparagus.”

“I heard you were the best in the world at least in guessing

ingredients;now I know it must be true.”

“I have never even considered making ice cream out of asparagus.....I’ve never tasted anything like this.”

If it was just asparagus, it might have tasted a bit bland. It might have been refreshing, but not enough to call an ice cream. But the carbonated cherry on top brought everything together. The sweetness hit your tongue at the same time as the carbonation, which made the asparagus sherbet taste like a refreshing herb cream.

It made sense for little Ella to think it was tasty. Jo Minjoon nodded his head as he started to speak.

“It’s like dipping ice cream in a sauce. It’s definitely a unique creation.”

“That is why many people keep calling me a genius.”

The man smiled with a confident expression. It was about the time he got off the truck and reached his hand out to Minjoon.

There was a creaking noise from behind them, and footsteps started to approach them. Ella, who was holding the spoon like a cane in her hand, was in the lead, and the kitchen family were coming out behind her. Anderson started to speak.

“Teacher, you are here. That means that this person here

“Rafael Yoon.”

The person who said the name was not Rafael himself. It was Janet. She asked in a somewhat moaning voice.

“Are you our sous chef?”

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“Rafael Yoon. Chairman of the Food Truck Chef Association The most innovative food truck owner-chef. Originally started cooking at the Arjo Hotel Restaurant La Gardewhy are there so many descriptors for him?”

“It just means he’s managed to succeed.”

Anderson answered shortly. Jo Minjoon read through all of Rafael’s experiences that popped up on his smartphone. While attending Culinary School, he decided they were bringing down his efficiency and dropped out to become an apprentice in his neighborhood restaurant. As he was about to become a prep cook there, he moved immediately to a hotel, and after only a few years as a sous chef there, he left there as well.

He then started a food truck. That was the moment the name Rafael Yoon reached the level of ‘Star Chef.’ Rafael used the food truck as a means to bring molecular gastronomy, something many people were curious about, straight to the people.

Of course the results were successful. Many people were interested in molecular gastronomy, but the majority of molecular gastronomy dishes were only found in fancy restaurants. There was no other option. The cost of molecular gastronomy equipment played a factor, but that was not the main reason. There were not many chefs who had properly studied molecular gastronomy, and there was no way those rare chefs would work in a mediocre restaurant.

In that aspect, Rafael Yoon’s ‘Molecular Ice Cream’ was quite refreshing. Setting the price to match the market made the amount of food you received small, but ice cream was not a dish you ate to get full in the first place. At first, people came to his truck because they were curious about molecular gastronomy, and as the name Rafael Yoon became popular, they stopped by with interest in him as a person.

“.....What a rollercoaster of a life.”

“Now our restaurant is a part of that roller coaster.”

“I wonder what the reason is.”

Janet, who had been quietly listening to the two of them talk,

started to mumble in a quiet voice. Janet spoke in a somewhat embarrassed voice.

“Looking at his experience, he just looks like someone who does whatever he wants to do.

“But he needs to have a reason for choosing Rose Island. He is someone who has managed to succeed with the food truck. He is someone who probably has no problem deciding from offers to become the head chef at many restaurants, so why is he coming here even at the cost of his beloved food truck? Even more weird is that it is as a sous chef. Shouldn't there be some type of reason for going on such an adventure?”

Jo Minjoon started to think hard at Janet's question. There was only one answer he could come up with.

“To learn from Teacher Rachel. I cannot think of any other reason.”

Jo Minjoon said that as he looked toward the office. Rafael had walked straight into the office once he entered the restaurant. Javier was in front of the door trying to eavesdrop on the conversation, but it didn't seem like he could hear anything. If he could, he wouldn't have kept his ear on the door when Isaac suddenly opened it. As Isaac stared him down with a cold gaze, Javier started to awkwardly laugh.

“Uh how did the conversation go?”

“Mr. Javier. Just what are you doing here?”

“It's okay, Isaac. It's something they will end up hearing anyways. Everybody, come over this way.”

Rachel motioned to them. Once everybody gathered together, Rachel smiled as she started to speak.

“As mentioned earlier, Rafael will be taking on the role of sous chef. Finally our kitchen is in balance. Now that that is settled, we can start to take care of the homework that has been piling up for a

while.”

“When you say homework, perhaps

Janet started to speak with a voice full of anticipation. Rachel nodded her head.

“Yes. It is time to determine your sections. At the same time, we also need to decide which prep cooks you will be partnering with.

Everybody’s ears perked up at Rachel’s comments. For the demi chefs, because of the section they will be responsible for, and for the prep cooks, the demi chefs they will be working with. Everybody was edgy because of that. It was especially complicated for Jo Minjoon. Not because of the arguments that will happen for the section. It was because he had still not made up his mind about the section he wanted to do. Pasta. Or main? He didn’t even consider molecular gastronomy. Rafael looked toward them before asking a question.

“Let me ask something first. Is there anybody here who is interested in molecular gastronomy?”

None of the demi chefs answered his question. In fact, they tried to avoid eye contact with him. Rafael continued on with a disappointed voice.

“Chef. Didn’t I say so? These days, everybody has this desire to reject molecular gastronomy. It’s not a bad type of food, it is also an area where you can mold your soul as a chef.”

“Yes. I know. So relax.”

Rafael was blurting out his disappointment, but soon, he looked down with a disappointed expression. His emotions seem to change quite quickly. Maybe it was this aspect of his personality that made him never stay at any one place for too long. Rachel continued to speak.

“I thought hard about how to assign your sections. And as usual, there was only one answer. No matter what, chefs must speak with

their skills!”

“Are you talking about a face off?”

“Similar. You will all learn his cooking from Rafael. Not only the demi chefs, but the prep cooks as well. At the same time, you will be learning from me as well.”

“.....Teacher, you will be doing molecular gastronomy as well?”

Anderson asked in a surprised voice. Although no one else had said it, all of their expressions were similar. Rachel was someone who had been cooking traditional dishes for her whole life. Even if the majority of the recently popular fancy restaurants relied on the help of molecular gastronomy, that was when the head chef was decently young. Most chefs like Rachel who had been researching traditional cooking for a long time did not like adjusting to change that much.

Rachel nodded her head.

“I wasn’t just playing around for the last ten years. I was focused on cooking, more than I had ever done so, in order to bring out a fantastic flavor. Molecular gastronomy was no exception.

Jo Minjoon was moaning internally. He liked that Rachel had researched molecular gastronomy. But the problem was the reason she did so. Rachel had always seen her husband’s cooking as the epitome for her to reach. But if she couldn’t close the gap using molecular gastronomy for food from a time when molecular gastronomy had not even been developed.....would that still be human cooking?

‘Cooking of the gods probably.’

Then Daniel was no different than a living God of Cooking. With his cooking level like that, Daniel’s shadow probably feels even bigger than it actually was when he was still alive. Rather than thinking there was a person whose dishes you couldn’t imitate or even imagineit was easier to believe he was a god.

Clap. The sound of a clap brought him out of his thoughts. Rachel looked at each and every one of them before speaking.

“There are three rules in my kitchen. First is to make sure we gift our customers with a taste they can only taste in their dreams. Second is to never forget our gratitude for our customers. And third, the final rule, is to never stop changing. So that nobody can get tired of our food. We can’t just leave molecular gastronomy out of the changes we have to overcome.”

“Even if you don’t end up in the molecular gastronomy section, you will need to understand how molecular cooking is done and how to properly bring out the flavor. Although the dishes you will touch will only be the dishes in your section, each dish cannot be on its own. Cooking is not about the individual plates, but the overall course. Do you understand what I am saying?”

“Yes chef!”

“Yes chef!”

Jo Minjoon answered first, and the rest shouted in unison right after. Rafael took his time looking at each of the demi chefs, and once he arrived in front of Jo Minjoon, he stopped and casually asked.

“So. What do you think? Do you still have no desire to be in charge of the molecular gastronomy section?”

Jo Minjoon responded.

“None at all.”

Chapter 177: The Person Who Showed Up on a Truck (3)

There was a reason Jo Minjoon was answering so firmly. It was not that he disliked molecular gastronomy. Rather, he was very much interested in molecular gastronomy. However

“I still have a long way to go with traditional cooking. I want to try molecular gastronomy once I gain a little more confidence.”

If traditional cooking was the basics, molecular gastronomy was like art. Jo Minjoon personally believed that rather than focusing on something so technical, he needed to still focus on the basics. Jo Minjoon took a peek at the other demi chefs before speaking.

“The three of them all have better skills and more experience than I do, so I wonder if molecular gastronomy wouldn’t be a better fit for one of them.”

After listening to what Jo Minjoon had to say, Rafael slowly made eye contact with the other three. They faked a cough as they avoided his gaze. Rafael let out a sigh before speaking.

“In the end, I am still rejected.”

Rachel smiled bitterly as she started to speak.

“No matter what, I trust that you will all sincerely learn it. We will be teaching you molecular gastronomy for the next ten days. After the ten days is up, you will need to have come up with a molecular gastronomy menu item. Of course, we do not need any ice cream.”

“.....Are you perhaps using the completion of these dishes to determine our sections?”

“Yes. The people that eat your food will be voting. I will give you the opportunity to pick your section based on the result. 2nd place will get to pick first, 3rd place second. Of course, 4th place has no

choice.”

Jo Minjoon tilted his head after hearing what she had to say. Something was odd.

“.....1st place doesn’t get to pick? Then what will the 1st place?”

The person to respond was Rafael.

“Molecular Gastronomy of course.”

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“.....Bleh. Disgusting.”

Ella stuck her tongue out like a dog as her whole face expressed disgust. Javier had a sad expression as he asked in an eager voice.

“Is it really terrible? Try one more bite. It might be different!”

Ella clamped her mouth shut and glared at Javier as she shook her head left and right. Janet glared at Javier as she started to speak.

“I told you it wouldn’t work on Ella. Pasta made of espresso. You think a kid would like that?”

“What is wrong with espresso pasta? She enjoyed the asparagus sherbet that the sous chef made.”

“The cherry sauce added sweetness to that dish. Plus, the harmony of the ingredients were great as well.”

“Sob sob, the internet said it was a good recipe.”

“Maybe for adults. But kids will only find it to be bitter. But more importantly, your pasta is terrible even to me. Are you doing this on purpose so you don’t end up in 1st place?”

“.....Have I been found out?”

Janet’s eyes became cold at Javier’s words. Javier quickly continued on.

“Joking. Just joking.”

“.....Okay Ella. You can get rid of that plate. Will you try this?”

Janet pushed forward the dish she made. With a quick glance, it just looked like the typical BBQ Pork Rib. But if you looked closely, you would be able to see that there was not a single burnt area. Javier had a displeased look that seemed to say that she was cheating.

“Hey. Sous vide is cheating. All that requires is time. Aren’t you putting too much on this competition?”

“Who said I made a dish for the competition? I just

Janet looked toward Ella. Ella tried hard to rip apart the pork rib with her fork, before giving up and using her hand to lift it up and eat it. Janet wiped the sauce on the side of Ella’s mouth with a napkin as she started to smile. It was the smile she did not show to the other kitchen family members.

“Is it good?”

“Yes. It is as good as bread my mom makes for me!”

“Then I guess it is really good.”

Ella nodded her head as she took another bite. Janet just quietly muttered to herself.

“If I had a kid, I would always feed them tasty food like this.”

“You can start having one now. Ah, you need a boyfriend first.”

Janet did not respond. She seemed to be happy just watching Ella enjoying the food. Jo Minjoon, who was watching from a distance, whispered to Lisa.

“Lisa, you might lose your place of loving Ella the most to Janet.”

“I’m glad. It seems like Ella will have someone to take care of her no matter when I die.”

“Ay. Why would you say something like that?”

“You never know what might happen.”

Lisa shrugged her shoulders. Since she wasn't trying to say it was a joke, it must be something she thought about a lot. Jo Minjoon looked toward Ella before he whispered to Lisa in a quiet voice.

“I promise. If something happens to you Lisa, I will take care of Ella. So please stop worrying. Don't even bring up something like that again. Especially for Ella.”

“.....I understand. But I am very thankful. Hearing you say that.”

“Cough.”

There was a sudden cough coming from behind them. It was Rafael. He looked toward Jo Minjoon before asking.

“Minjoon. Isn't it about time you started to determine a direction? The menu item you will put out. Have you decided which method you are going to use?”

“No. Honestly, the easiest method to use in molecular gastronomy seems to be something like the sous videbut I don't think it is appropriate to use in the challenge.”

“Outside of the challenge, what is your favorite method?”

Rafael looked toward Minjoon with curious eyes. The first ever wielder of absolute taste in history. How will that title be used in his ability as a chef? Jo Minjoon fell deep into thought.

His eyes looked toward an empty area in front of him and his eyes were hazy. He was not looking at the system window. He was just deep in thought.

Rafael personally like that gaze of Minjoon's. That 4th dimensional type of look that felt like he was lost in his own world. Chefs were artists. And just like artists, they needed that type of peculiarity to succeed.

‘These days, there are only stubborn and inflexible fools in the culinary world.’

Of course that was good too. The world needed chefs who will maintain the taste of tradition. But for Rafael, he was someone who preferred to twist and change the old rather than protecting it. To make an analogy, rather than digging a well deeper than anybody else, he preferred to dig many decent sized wells and connect them.

In that aspect, Rafael really liked Jo Minjoon. After spending the last few days with Minjoon, Rafael could feel it. Jo Minjoon and he were the same kind of people. If you put it nicely, they were both geniuses living outside the scope of the normal people's line of thinking. If you wanted to be mean about it, they were both showing signs of being geeky lunatics.

‘This type of person can never be satisfied with traditional dishes alone. If there are more ways of cooking, he would want to make all of them his to release his frustration.....’

Although Jo Minjoon did not want to take part in molecular gastronomy right now, that was because he still had a lot of things to learn about traditional cooking. Once he understands the variety of options molecular gastronomy offers, Jo Minjoon will also be seduced by its charm just as he had been seduced. Rafael was certain of it.

Jo Minjoon was lost in his thoughts for close to five minutes. Usually, he wouldn't contemplate this long for a question someone asked, but when it came to cooking, he tended to do this every so often. Should we call it losing track of time? But Rafael even found such tendency to be a positive thing.

Jo Minjoon started to speak.

“The taste of the ingredients.”

“Taste?”

“Not only for molecular gastronomy, but the type of cooking I like is about that. Making sure that each and every one of the

ingredients don't hide the flavor they contain. With cooking, usually there is one main aspect of a dish. The rest of the ingredients or herbs are just the sidekicks helping to add on to the flavor..... but I prefer a dish where every ingredient plays the main role while not getting in the way of each other's taste but actually helpingand being perfect the way it is. Am I speaking nonsense?"

"No, not at all. Continue."

"The most charming aspect of molecular gastronomy is that you can turn a liquid sauce into a dry powder sauce, turn it into a jelly, or even into a syrup. I think something like that is what I like the most. Some people might think the only change is the texture, but that's not true. Based on how it touches your tongue and the texture, your perception of the taste can change completely. Just like how the same actor can play completely different characters in different movies although it is the same person, they bring out a completely different flavor. That that is really beautiful to me."

Maybe just thinking about it was touching his heart, but Jo Minjoon's voice started to shake a bit as he was finishing his words. Rafael looked toward that Jo Minjoon with a blank expression. Jo Minjoon truly did not have much interest in molecular gastronomy. No, to be specific, he did not have any thoughts about starting molecular gastronomy right now.

But the fact that he can still get that excited talking about molecular gastronomy..... that showed that the feelings he had for cooking, the feelings he had for food in general, were plentiful. What surprised Rafael the most was that while thinking about the methods of changing the state of matter of a sauce, he focused on the taste rather than the texture.

"Ta.....taste, huh?"

"Is it weird?"

“It is not a sin for chefs to be weird. Rather, you need to be weird to a point where it feels like you might be slightly crazy, in order to create dishes that will surprise people. Maybe in a family restaurant it would be fine, but what people expect from a place like this is not just the taste. It also has to be fun.”

That was Rafael’s iron rule about cooking. Go past the taste and make sure the cooking is fun.

No matter how good the taste is, if it is boring, they won’t look for it again. Just like how no matter how much cool effects are in a movie, if it is not fun, you would never watch it again. Rafael continued to speak.

Of course the base of it all is the taste. But I am surprised. Barely twenty one it is difficult to get such insights at that age. The impact texture has on taste did you perhaps hear that from someone else?”

“I’m..... not quite sure. I just had that thought.”

There were many people who influenced his cooking. Of course the greatest influence was from Kaya, but it would be a lie to say everything he did was similar to Kaya.

Rafael started to speak.

“Since things are like this anyways, try hard to get 1st place. Doing molecular gastronomy doesn’t mean that you will only increase your molecular gastronomy skills. You don’t need to worry about your traditional cooking level going down.”

“Do you really believe I don’t need to worry about that?”

Rafael’s gaze shook. He continued in a not so confident voice.

“.....I think so?”

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Since Kaya arrived, there was a slight change in Jo Minjoon’s daily routine. Usually, he would be laying on his bed this late at night,

but he was running across the Santa Monica beach. Of course the goal wasn't exercise but something else. The only time he could spend with Kaya was during the night, and this was the best way to make most of their evening time together.

Not long after Minjoon started running, a woman naturally started to run next to him. It was Kaya. Jo Minjoon took a peek at Kaya. Under the street light and the moonlight, he could see her skin-tight workout outfit. Jo Minjoon started to frown.

“Hey, why are you dressed like that?”

“What?”

“The line is showing too much. There's a lot of people here.”

“It's normal to wear something like this when you are working out.”

“Not normal.”

“.....You never said anything to Chloe.”

Jo Minjoon could only open and close his mouth. Rather than the content of what Kaya said, he felt like his heart sank when Kaya mentioned Chloe. Kaya still did not know that Chloe had confessed to him. Jo Minjoon looked away as he started to grumble.

“At least wear a vest over it next time.”

Why are you nagging so much when people aren't even paying attention to us? It'll just increase the amount of laundry I have to do. If you sweat and don't wash it right away, it'll smell like sweat.

“Now that you mention it, who is doing the laundry? Do you do it yourself? Or does the agent do it for you?”

“I can't stand the thought of someone else touching my underwear. It is too embarrassing. You don't think so?”

“.....I don't know. Not really?”

“Start being embarrassed. Even to me. If you make me do your

laundry in the future, I will kill you.”

She talked about living together so casually that Jo Minjoon didn't realize what was weird for an instant. Jo Minjoon continued to walk as he looked toward Kaya. Kaya tried hard to not make eye contact with him, before speaking in a grumbled voice.

“Why do you keep looking at me like that.”

“Nothing. Just curious.”

“About what?”

Jo Minjoon smiled mischievously as he answered.

“What the person who will do my laundry for me in the future looks like.”

Chapter 178: The Person Who Showed Up on a Truck (4)

“I told you I wasn’t going to. If you keep fooling around, I’m going to punch you.”

Kaya said that as she stretched her fist and punched his shoulder. Jo Minjoon rubbed his shoulder as he looked at her with a look of disbelief.

“Who hits while giving a warning?”

“Don’t fret over the small stuff. Anyways, how was today?”

“It’s the same for me every day. Learn molecular gastronomy from the Head Chef and Sous Chef, research, try to develop a recipe.....Ah. I really want to head the main or pasta station. What would you want?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think I would hate molecular gastronomy. It would be fun.”

“It’ll definitely be fun. It’ll feel like doing a science experiment too. But how do I put this? It doesn’t feel like I’m cooking.....and I want to focus more on the basics. That is why I have no desire to win at this recipe battle.”

“Let’s rest a bit.”

Kaya stopped walking and plopped down on a bench as she started to catch her breath. As Jo Minjoon sat down next to her, Kaya slowly leaned her head on Minjoon’s shoulder and hugged him. Jo Minjoon spoke in a nervous voice.

“Hey, what if someone sees us.....”

“Who cares about that? I’m hugging my man.”

“But this is too much.”

“Oh, but casually kissing in the cafe wasn’t too much? You made

the picture of a twenty-ish year old girl kissing a man spread throughout the internet.”

Kaya lifted her head to look at Minjoon before putting her cheek back on his neck. Jo Minjoon sighed as he replied.

“You provoked me quite a bit that day. You made it so I couldn’t maintain my rationality.”

“What. Then it wasn’t rationality but a kiss done on instinct. Is that it?”

“Let’s not call it instinct but emotion.”

Kaya looked up toward Minjoon. Jo Minjoon looked down at her before speaking in a tired voice.

“You look really ugly right now.”

“Watch your mouth. I am your girlfriend. I don’t expect a Romeo or a Hamlet, so how about at least showing Werther’s level of purity?”

“If you are talking about The Sorrows of Young Werther, isn’t that the one where the main character has a one-sided, unrequited love before committing suicide?”

“Yes. So how about being a little more thankful. You don’t need to love me without me loving you back, hmm nor face an ending like that.”

“I am more shocked before I am thankful. When did you read a book like that? It is a classic so it should have been difficult to read.”

At his words, Kaya smirked before taking her smartphone out. After reading the lines on the screen, Jo Minjoon made a disgusted expression. There was information about all sorts of classic literature and masterpieces summarized in two to three lines. Taking The Sorrows of Young Werther for example, it stated, ‘Goethe’s novel, the main character has a one-sided, unrequited

love before committing suicide.’

“.....What is this?”

“How to transform into an educated person in just 5 minutes, page 1.”

Kaya laughed as she answered. Jo Minjoon showed no response and just looked quietly at Kaya.

Kaya pouted before putting her smartphone away.

“I haven’t learned anything. Everybody just ignores me. So I wanted to show that I am not as stupid as you all think I am! I wanted to be able to say that..... was I being stupid?”

“More like I’m curious. You care enough to look up that type of stuff, but why don’t you have any thoughts about actually reading the book?”

“You said it yourself. It will be difficult. Anyways, I want to give you some advice as well. Molecular gastronomy. Won’t it be easy to just think of it this way? Just like this shortened the information of the book, molecular gastronomy is just bringing the uniqueness of each ingredient out. I have no confidence in understanding classical literature even if I read it. That is why I need the summary like this. I’m sure there will be those type of people. Those type of customers.”

Jo Minjoon quietly paid attention to what Kaya was saying. Kaya continued as if she was whispering. Her voice and breath approached him and started to tickle his chin.

“I know my man. If there is a customer, no matter what the situation is, he is the type to put in his whole effort in the dish. So don’t even worry about the chance of ending up in the molecular gastronomy section. And that mission. Push yourself to win it. I don’t want you to lose to anybody other than myself.”

“I already lost to Anderson though?”

“Ah, really. Why would you talk about him. It’s just a saying. Just a saying. Can’t even tell the atmosphere.....”

Kaya’s words were cut off. Jo Minjoon lightly kissed her and started to smile. Kaya turned red as she pulled her shirt up to her nose to cover her mouth and looked around.

“Hey! What are you doing when there are so many people?”

Jo Minjoon smiled.

“Who cares about other people looking? I’m choosing to kiss my woman.”

“.....That makes you sound like a player.”

“I just repeated your words back to you.”

“The nuance between hugging and kissing are completely different! Sob sob, I’m worried. There’s no girl following you around in the kitchen saying she likes you, is there?”

He wanted to say there wasn’t, but Ella’s face popped up in his mind and his mouth stopped. Kaya did not miss that moment and started to glare.

“There is.”

“It’s a 6 year old little girl. Don’t worry.”

“How can I not she’s six?”

Kaya now looked at Minjoon like he was a criminal. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya as if to ask why she was like that. Kaya looked like she didn’t want to be an accomplice and shouted in a whisper.

“I know you like younger girls, but isn’t that too much? I’m only 18 and now a six year old.....!”

“Rather than saying I like younger girls, I think it is more like I am popular with the younger girls.”

“I need to make a mark saying you are mine. Where should I stamp?”

Jo Minjoon scratched his head before answering.

“If you want the help of the law, I guess a marriage license?”

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Kaya herself did not now this, but Minjoon did not just treat the words coming out of her mouth as that of his girlfriend's. The words of someone who was always a role model to Minjoon, it was no different than a teaching moment. He wanted to be a good chef. He wanted to be like Kaya.

That is why Jo Minjoon stopped calculating. The only thinking that needed to happen with ingredients in front of him was figuring out a recipe. That type of mindset was clearly visible from the way he was now treating molecular gastronomy. His expression was more focused than ever before, and his hands moved quickly. Rachel asked with a slightly confused expression.

“You seem to be focusing more than usual. Are you finally finding molecular gastronomy to be fun?”

“It was fun from the beginning. However, the fact that I would be stuck with molecular gastronomy for a while if I won was frustrating mebut I'm just going to throw those types of thoughts away. I believe in you, teacher Rachel, and sous chef Rafael. I have faith in myself as well. Not only will my skills in molecular gastronomy go up, my understanding of real cooking can go up as well. I'm sure the two of you will guide me to make that happen.

Rachel just started to smile at Minjoon's words. Anderson, who was standing nearby, snorted as he started to speak.

“That is only if you win.”

“You honestly have no desire to win. Isn't that right?”

Anderson showed a guilty expression at Minjoon's question. It was not just Anderson. Janet and Javier were the same. All three of them wanted to handle traditional cooking over molecular

gastronomy. Janet spoke in her usual indifferent voice.

“Seeing as how you are talking like that, it looks like you now have a reason to win?”

“It is a battle. Why do we have battles? Of course it is to win.”

“.....You call that a reason.”

Jo Minjoon nodded his head. Janet looked at him like she could not understand him. Javier let out a fake cough.

“Fine. I will give you first place. But I must take second.”

“.....You mean second from the back, right?”

“Of course it is second from the front.”

Janet, Anderson, and Javier all fiercely glared at one another. Rafael, who had been watching the three of them, spoke in an upset voice.

“Don’t be so blunt about your dislike of molecular gastronomy. It’s so tasty.”

“It is tasty, but extremely annoying. Plus, it is not tastier than traditional cooking. It is a different kind of taste.”

“You need to know the value of that difference!”

“I didn’t say I don’t know the value of it.”

Janet answered in a calm voice. Rafale looked like he wanted to shout, but just sighed and closed his mouth.

Jo Minjoon stopped paying attention to them and focused back on the dish he was making.

Jelly had a more extensive history than expected. The ancient Romans solidified meat and broth to eat it in jelly form. And a new method that was created from molecular gastronomy was using agar.

Compared to jelly made from gelatin, jelly made from agar was more chewy, but also felt like it could break apart easier

almost like the texture of noodles.

Jo Minjoon's recipe was simple. First, grind garlic, basil, and onion into a chicken broth, and add agar, salt, pepper and other seasoning before boiling it. Then put that in a syringe to squeeze it into a silicon tube the thickness of a spaghetti noodle, and let the tube cool down in cold water.

The next part was the most difficult part. It was also the part that seemed to be the furthest away from cooking. Fill the syringe with air, and put it in the tube to use the air and push the jelly spaghetti noodle out.

On a quick glance, it could look funny like he was conducting an experiment, but Jo Minjoon was more focused than ever. First he needed to squeeze the needle with the tube to prevent air from seeping out, and then he needed to carefully squeeze the air so that the noodle did not break.

“.....It is complete.”

Jo Minjoon looked at the noodle with a proud expression. It was a transparent noodle with a green tint. But this was not the end. He had to put it back in the fridge and let it ferment for another 24 hours. After that, anything was possible. He could add any type of ingredient he wanted, and as long as the temperature did not go past 80 degrees, it could be served warm as well.

Nobody knew when she showed up, but Ella was looking toward them with a black expression. To be more specific, she was looking at the jelly spaghetti Minjoon was making. Jo Minjoon shook his head.

“Ella. I'm sorry, but I can't give you this right now. Tomorrow, after it finishes fermenting, I can give it to you.”

Ella nodded while almost drooling. Anderson looked at that with an amused expression.

“Looks like you are going to present this as your menu item for

the battle. Am I right?”

“Isn’t it fun? Normally, you would have to chew the noodle along with other ingredients, but with this, all you have to do is chew the noodle to feel all of the ingredients. I think this type of recipe is what makes molecular gastronomy fun.”

“You need to eat it to know whether it is fun or not.”

But it was something Jo Minjoon made. Anderson was already certain that this dish was going to be fun. At least the Jo Minjoon he had been watching until now was a genius when it came to coming up with recipes. He was comparable to head chefs in that aspect. There was no recipe that Jo Minjoon came up with that wasn’t delicious.

That wasn’t only because Jo Minjoon used the system’s abilities to check the estimated score of a dish. These days, when he checked the estimated score of a dish, there were rarely any time that it fell below 7 points. That showed just how hard he had been working. When it came to holding the pan and knife, his cooking level may only be a 7, but if you consider only the creativity in coming up with recipes.....Jo Minjoon may already be far ahead of Anderson.

Although Anderson could not see the system, he felt something similar. Jo Minjoon’s creativity was becoming more sophisticated and meticulous. Sometimes it was to the point that it scared him. Anderson quietly started to speak.

“The recipe battle, do you have any confidence in winning?”

“Can an athlete who goes into the ring without any confidence beat their opponent?”

“..... This feels weird. I want to tell you to win, but I also don’t want to lose on purpose to let you win.”

“Lose on purpose? Yeah right. More like you’ll just end up losing.”

Anderson did not answer and just turned around with a complicated expression before heading to his countertop. Although the prize for first place was not something he wanted, he didn't seem to want to lose to Jo Minjoon either.

Janet and Javier were feeling pretty similar. They each headed to their countertops and diligently started to ponder about their recipes. Rafael clenched his fist and hugged Minjoon before kissing Minjoon's cheek. Jo Minjoon was grossed out and backed away. Rafael smiled as he started to speak.

“Thank you Minjoon. You were a good stimulant for them.”

“.....Must you show your thanks through a kiss?”

“Sometimes, I need to act like a white person like this.”

“If my girlfriend saw it, she would have thrown a good punch.”

“At you? Or at me?”

Jo Minjoon smiled instead of responding. It was a meaningful smile. Rafael started to shake in fear.

“You must be dating quite the feisty woman.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders.

“She is a woman who is like the MSG of my life.”

Chapter 179: Taking the Initiative (1)

[Chicken Jelly Spaghetti]

Freshness: 99%

Origin: (There are too many ingredients, so it is hidden)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 7/10

‘7 points with just the noodle.’

Jo Minjoon put the jelly spaghetti that finished fermenting in his mouth. He could feel the elasticity of jelly, but since it was jelly made with agar, the softness worked with the elasticity to give it the chewy texture like a normal noodle. If you focus just on the texture, it might even be difficult to tell whether it was a noodle or jelly.

Just eating the noodle by itself tasted like a decent dish. It had to be that way. Already inside the noodle wasn't grains but chicken broth and basil, pepper, salt, etc. Janet, who was standing nearby, stealthily put Jo Minjoon's spaghetti in her mouth and her eyes opened up a little wider. Jo Minjoon smirked as he asked.

“How is it. Tasty?”

“.....It's good, but.”

Janet had a slightly uncomfortable expression as she looked toward the spaghetti. Jo Minjoon understood the meaning of her gaze.

“Something is missing.”

“First, there needs to be some type of garnish that will add a crispy texture. Sprinkle some olive oil, but not add any other herbs since the flavors of the ingredients inside are already strong.”

Although she didn't have casual conversations that often, Janet

tended to talk a lot when it was related to cooking. There was only one other reason for her to talk. Janet turned her head as she started to speak.

“Ella, do you want to eat this?”

“Yes!”

“She says she wants to.”

Jo Minjoon started to laugh at Janet’s gaze that seemed to be asking why he wasn’t giving it to Ella yet. Ella put her chin on the countertop and looked past the dish with sparkling eyes. Seeing the light green noodle, Ella opened her mouth and started to admire it, with her chin still on the countertop.

“It looks like jelly!”

“It is spaghetti made from jelly.”

“Make spaghetti with jelly? Then do I put tomato sauce on it?”

“You can..... but it probably won’t taste good.”

Jo Minjoon answered with an expression that said he couldn’t really imagine that taste. Janet brought over some tomato paste and started to speak.

“It’s not tomato sauce, but try dipping it. You’ll at least be able to tell the taste.”

“Ah, thanks.”

Of course it was bad. Jo Minjoon shook his head as he started to speak.

“I need to either just put this out as cold pasta, or make it using a vegetable broth instead of a chicken broth and then add some seafood. That might be a better way.”

“If you are done contemplating, I want you to try my dish.”

“Yours?”

“You supposedly have absolute taste. Although you are a

competitor, I should use whatever is available. You don't have to if you don't want to."

"Give it to me."

Jo Minjoon snatched the dish from Janet's hand. Janet's dish was a ravioli. But if there was anything different than a regular ravioli, the dough was transparent and as thin as a plastic bag. It was a molecular gastronomy method called film, made with starch and lecithin.

On first glance you might think of the rice paper used in Vietnamese Spring Rolls, but it was so much thinner to be compared to it, and melted easily in your mouth. What Janet had put inside was thinly sliced peanuts and a vegetable broth that was seasoned and then chilled.

'8 points.'

When it comes to molecular gastronomy, the slightest mistake in ratio leads to failure. Which means, any successful molecular gastronomy dish had no choice but to receive high points. But Jo Minjoon had an odd expression on his face after eating Janet's ravioli.

'Compared to the points of the dish, it's not as good as I expected.'

".....What. Is it bad?"

"Rather than saying it is bad should I call it mechanical?"

Hearing that it was not human, Janet's eyes started to shake. Jo Minjoon quickly waved his hand as he continued.

"I am not saying that about you at all. What I am trying to say is ... I feel like you focused a lot on making a great dish. There is a difference between cooking well and a tasty dish. You know what I mean?"

"I understood."

“But don’t focus too much on it because it is not terrible.”

“If it was you.....”

Janet’s lips quivered. She wanted to say something, but it seemed to be hard to actually get herself to say it. But Jo Minjoon did not urge her to continue. He was used to waiting. He was used to listening to other people’s silence. He was that type of person.

In the end, that endurance let Janet finally start to speak.

“If it was you, how would you have done it?”

The moment he heard what Janet had to say, he could understand why Janet hesitated so much. She was normally stiff and pretty rough. In some aspects, she was even worse than Kaya. For someone like her to ask Jo Minjoon a cooking related question, it probably was not easy for her pride and personality to allow.

Jo Minjoon responded with a serious expression. Since Janet made such a difficult decision to ask, he couldn’t just give a simple answer. Jo Minjoon ripped apart and fixed the recipe tens of times in his head. What he was focused on wasn’t the points, but the taste.

The taste from his imagination wouldn’t be completely accurate, but the transferability has been going up slowly. As proof of that, these days, the tastes he imagine as he comes up with recipes were not much different than the end result. It was proof that his intuition regarding taste was getting higher.

“If it was me, I would have used cornstarch instead of potato starch to start. It wouldn’t be as transparent, but the feeling when it touches the tongue should be better. As for the broththe lightness of the vegetable broth doesn’t seem to be able to keep up with the oily taste of the peanut. Wouldn’t a fish broth be better?”

“.....You thought about a lot in a short amount of time.”

“This is our job. I need to do at least this much. But it seems like you are slowly starting to want to win.”

“Nothing has changed about my desire to work appetizers. Still, even if 2nd place is the best situation.....I also don’t want to lose.”

Jo Minjoon started to laugh.

“I’m the same way.”

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Ten days was not a long time. At least for molecular gastronomy beginners trying to come up with a proper ‘menu’ recipe, it was an extremely short amount of time.

There was no need to even discuss the prep cooks. Their homework everyday was to recreate the recipes Rachel came up with that day, and that could be traditional cooking or molecular gastronomy. In addition to that, they had a more important problem than digesting those menus. That was

“Who sharpened my knife?”

Anderson shouted in an irritated voice. The prep cooks looked at each other. The one to step forward was Maya, a Hispanic woman who still had some baby fat on her cheeks. She cautiously started to speak.

“I sharpened it. It seemed to be missing some teeth.....”

“You said you were from Great Cuisine; do they just touch other people’s knives however they want over there? Don’t do it unless you are asked to do so! I hate other people touching my knife.”

“Yes, chef! I’m very sorry!”

It looked like she was trying to earn some points, but all she got was anger. Her fellow prep cook, Gerrick, clicked his tongue as he started to speak.

“Tsk. Tsk. If you are going to sharpen knives like that, you should have sharpened chef Minjoon or chef Javier’s knives. The two of them would have been thankful. I could have told you that.”

“.....I don’t know. I’m doomed.”

Maya mumbled with a devastated expression. An African man originally from Kenya, Fred, whispered in a quiet voice not fitting his large body.

“It’s fine. Even if you don’t try to earn points from them, if you end up working with them, they’re definitely going to treat you well. Just hope you don’t end up unlucky and work for chef Janet or chef Anderson. They’re going to be really harsh.”

Among the prep cooks, the two of them were the current list of people to avoid. In Anderson’s case, he had been showing a rough side from the beginning. Of course he needed to be stern to make sure the prep cooks focus and cook properly, but they were afraid about how harsh he would be once the restaurant officially opened.

As for Janet, she wasn’t the type to raise her voice like Anderson, but if you make a mistake, she’ll glare at you to the point you’ll be scared to death. Maya let out a sigh as she started to speak.

“When I become a demi chef, I won’t be like the two of them. I’ll treat my prep cooks nicely.”

“I want to work for chef Minjoon.”

“But chef Minjoon has a hidden tough side too. Of course it is much better compared to the other two. I like chef Javier because he is nice.”

“It’s because you haven’t properly experienced it that you are saying that. It is those chefs who are the scariest when you are actually working. It’s probably better to get cursed at by chef Anderson.”

The person saying that was Antonio, a young man who had flew all the way here from Italy just for Rose Island.

Maya looked toward Antonio and asked.

“So you are saying you like chef Anderson, is that it?”

“Yes.”

“In the end, the only chef that nobody wants to work for is chef Janet.”

“Chef Janet is she feels like she’s full of venom. When you are next to her, I feel like I can’t breathe because I am so nervous.”

Gerrick let out a sigh at Antonio’s words.

“What good is it going to do for us to talk like this? In the end, the demi chefs have the power to select us.”

It was just as he said. Based on the results of the molecular gastronomy mission, Rachel announced that the demi chefs would also get prep cook selection orders.

Maya groaned before speaking.

“I think chef Minjoon will win. The jelly spaghetti he has been making lately, it is so hard for me to follow. Matching the density is hard, pushing the air in the tube with the syringe is hard.....”

“If you think about it, the chefs are new to molecular gastronomy just like us, so why are they better than us?”

“Because their foundations are strong, their dexterity is good too. Anyways, it makes sense for the other chefs, but chef Minjoon is really amazing. How could he have such skills at 21..... it’s not like he has kitchen experience from somewhere else.”

“That just means he worked hard on his own.”

Jo Minjoon’s abilities were quite often a talking point for them. It was because most of them were similar, or a bit older than he was. Anderson was a bit older than Jo Minjoon, and had been gaining experience due to the influence of his parents since he was young, so they could accept.

But Jo Minjoon was younger than Anderson, and of course did not have as much experience as Anderson. But his abilities weren’t much different than Anderson’s, so they all respected him while

envying his abilities at the same time.

“.....I wonder if they know they’re not controlling their voices right now.”

Jo Minjoon whispered to Anderson who was next to him. The four prep cooks had forgotten to control their voices starting from the middle of the conversation, and were talking at a level that they could all hear. Anderson snorted as he responded.

“You must be happy. You’re a respected supervisor.”

“So why do you act so rough.....”

“I was born to be like a disney villain, so what can I do?”

He grumbled and answered as if he was joking, but there was a visible nervousness in his eyes. It made sense. Ten days had passed. That meant that soon, they would need to battle.

The battle method introduced by Rachel was simple. They would travel around in a food truck and show their molecular gastronomy dishes to the public. It was not based on who sold the most. They would find random people to try all four of their dishes and have them vote.

Jo Minjoon took out a decently fermented jelly pasta from the fridge. It wasn’t just spaghetti. He had a blue colored ravioli filled with fruits, and a red colored lasagna. This was what he came up with after hearing Janet say something was missing.

Increasing the variety. The disappointing part was that everything was compressed into one. But it wasn’t like he could give up on the compressed nature. So the only answer was to increase the types. Anderson, who was next to him, looked at it with a bitter expression.

“.....Should I have made different ones too?”

“Mine looks like many, but they’re all tied together under the category of jelly pasta.”

“That is true, but.....”

“You want 2nd place anyways. Then won’t it be better for me to safely take 1st place?”

“You talk like you’re guaranteed to be 1st place.”

“Kaya told me not to lose.”

“.....You must have a screw loose. Do you like Kaya that much?”

Anderson spoke as if he could not understand. Jo Minjoon had an expression that seemed to be saying ‘why are you asking the obvious’ before he answered.

“There’s no reason not to like her. She’s nice, cute, pretty, cooks well, and talented. Wow. Now that I think about it, she’s amazing. Just what it is that my girlfriend lacks?”

Anderson grabbed his forehead, as if it was too tiring to even respond. He then closed his eyes and started to mutter as if he was praying.

‘Lord. Please forgive my friend. He seems crazy, but he’s not crazy.’

“Since you are not saying anything, you must be amazed as well. See, Kaya really is the perfect girlfriend.”

Jo Minjoon continued. Anderson closed his eyes again.

‘.....I’m sorry. I lied. He really is crazy.’

Chapter 180: Taking the Initiative (2)

This is a sponsored chapter. Thank you to Nedim K., Toan N., Étienne C., Joseph W., and Steven D. for your support.

The time they got on the food truck and left was right after lunch. The location was Hollywood. Since the crowd was focused in this area at all hours of day, Rachel calculated that this would be the best place to have the tasting. Rose Island was so famous that it didn't even need PR, but it was still different to be active in people's minds rather than in the corner of their memory.

With having so many people needing to move, the food truck alone was not enough. Justin was behind the wheel while the demi chefs and prep cooks were all in the van.

It was no wonder that the prep cooks were nervous and could not say anything. The demi chefs were nervous for a different reason, so they didn't say much either.

In the middle of the silence, Jo Minjun just quietly stared into his smartphone.

#We are currently headed to Hollywood.

We plan on doing a simple molecular gastronomy tasting.

We invite all interested people to come check it out. The location is

Maya Patel: Molecular gastronomy? It seems it is rare to find a fancy restaurant these days that does not do molecular gastronomy.

↳ Kylee Wilson : Although molecular gastronomy is treated as being completely different than traditional cooking, it is really talking about the act of treating cooking with science. So if you want to be strict with it, technically all cooking is molecular gastronomy.

Ravin May : Congratulations, Minjun. I was wondering when it would happen, but you finally made Kaya your woman. So when is the wedding?

└ Jo Minjun [1] : I am only 21 years old. It's still a bit early to think about marriage.

└ Kaya Lotus : @Jo Minjun So that's how you feel?

└ Jo Minjun : @Kaya Lotus Why are you looking at this right now?

The peaceful comment box suddenly froze from the chill. Jo Minjun stared at the screen with a nervous expression. But Kaya did not respond. As he continued to refresh the page with anxiety, he could only see the comments from other people.

Ravin May : Did I just light a fire between the two of them?

└ Jasmyn Osburn : I think so.

└ Anderson Russo : Thank you. Thank you very much.

Jo Minjun silently looked to the side. Anderson did not make eye contact with Minjun while just looking at his smartphone. Jo Minjun asked in a low voice.

“Anything you want to say?”

“No.”

“Is something wrong?”

“No, nothing.”

Jo Minjun slowly shook his head at Javier's question. Maybe Javier didn't want the silence from before to return, as he quickly started up a conversation.

“Anyways, I am both nervous and full of anticipation. If it is Hollywood, maybe some celebrities will show up as our customers.”

“Even if we don't go to Hollywood, once the restaurant opens, we

will have a lot of reservations. I'm sure there will be a good amount of celebrities as well?"

"Even Obama might come."

At Minjun's response, the demi chefs, as well as the prep cooks all started to laugh. Only Anderson nodded his head with sincerity.

"It would be a question of when he comes. I'm sure he would come. As long as he can get through and make a reservation."

"Don't we usually give special treatment for VIPs like that?"

"Teacher Rachel is famous for not doing anything like that. Honestly, once you get to teacher's level, there are no repercussions for doing that. Restaurants give special service to celebrities for the PR effect, but Rose Island doesn't need PR. I'm sure if it is a personal relationship, it is possible to treat them on the side outside of the restaurant....."

A restaurant that even the president of the United States needs to wait in line. He felt like just being a member of that kitchen would give a sense of pride. Maybe the reason Rachel's disciples continued to stay under the 'Rose Island' brand even though they are giants in the industry.....maybe that type of pride played a big factor.

"I want to open something like a branch of Rose Island in the future."

While talking about something like this, it was natural for this kind of statement to be said. If there was a problem with it, it was because of the person who said it. Antonio looked toward the driver's seat with a shocked expression.

"Justin. You are just the apprentice. You can't be talking about that already."

"Hey."

Before Justin could say anything, Janet looked toward Antonio

with a chilly gaze. Antonio had a guilty expression as he responded.

“Yes, yes?”

“Who are you to tell someone else not to dream? Can’t an apprentice think about what they want to do in the future? Do they not have the qualifications to do that?”

“N, no, it’s not like that

“Of course it is like that. Then what do you think about when you are cooking? Isn’t it about getting your own kitchen in the future and owning your own restaurant? But you are telling him that because he is the apprentice, he can’t have a dream like that. It is too early. That is what you are saying right now.”

“Chef. I’m okay.”

Seeing the atmosphere turn tense, Justin opened his mouth to calm Janet down. Janet slowly turned her gaze to look at Justin. It was still sharp and fierce.

“You’re okay?”

“Yes. Chef Antonio was just saying it as a joke.....”

“So it’s okay to turn your dream into a joke?”

Justin could not easily respond to that question. Janet looked toward them as if she didn’t like them. Jo Minjun put his hand on Janet’s shoulder as he started to speak in a calm voice.

“Janet. I understand where you are coming from, but don’t put them on the spot like that. I’m sure Antonio wasn’t being malicious when he said that.”

“.....I understand so move your hand. I’m calm.”

Jo Minjun lifted his palm as he sent a signaling gaze to Antonio. Thankfully, Antonio understood and quickly started to speak.

“I’m sorry. I will not treat anyone’s dream like that in the

future.”

“Why are you apologizing to me?”

“Ah. Yes. Sorry, Justin.”

“That’s okay.”

“I’m glad it ended nicely.”

Javier tactlessly smirked as he said that. Jo Minjun nodded his head.

“Janet is nice. Taking care of our youngest like that.”

Janet looked toward Minjun with a look of ‘what the hell are you talking about,’ before shutting up. If she responded to that, she would be the only one to look foolish. The prep cooks in the back started to whisper in a quiet voice.

‘Nice?’

‘Is he being serious?’

‘I never knew there would be anybody who would call chef Janet nice. Especially in a situation like this.’

‘Let’s try to understand. Chef Minjun is Kaya’s boyfriend after all.’

At those last words, all of them nodded their heads as if they agreed.

They soon arrived at their destination. It was in front of a theatre in Hollywood. The moment Jo Minjun and Anderson got out of the car, as if they had been waiting, a group of people started to crowd around them. Their voices instantly shot out like an explosion.

“Anderson! Can you take just one picture with me?”

“Minjun, congratulations on working it out with Kaya!”

“Can you sign this for me?”

Jo Minjun and Anderson couldn’t help but be swept up in their

momentum. They took pictures with nervous expressions, shook hands, and signed things. They were thankful that there weren't too many people.

Seeing the two of them signing things for the fans, the others just quietly watched them. Javier mumbled as if he was envious.

"I should have gone on Grand Chef as well. Then I would have fans like that too."

"I'm sure it is not just one or two days but all the time that people crowd them. I don't like it. I prefer the quiet."

"Yes. That is very like you."

Javier laughed at Janet's words. He then looked toward the prep cooks. Gerrick mumbled as if it finally felt real.

"The two of them are decent celebrities."

"I'm sure it is just a matter of time before they become star chefs. They already have the recognition."

"So cool."

"The four of you over there. Stop staring at them and come over here. Let's get the kitchen set up."

"Ah, yes! Chef!"

At Javier's order, the prep cooks all headed over. Thanks to that, once Jo Minjun and Anderson managed to get away from the unexpected baptism of fans, the food truck was all prepped. Jo Minjun immediately took a look at his jelly pastas in the food truck fridge. Their condition looked good. Jo Minjun looked toward Gerrick who was standing next to him and started to speak.

"Please do it well like we practice. I'm trusting you."

"Yes, chef!"

There was a simple reason Minjun said that to Gerrick. For this tasting, the demi chefs were not actually cooking, but serving their

food and explaining their dishes.

But since Minjun's dish needed some extra touch up, he picked Gerrick as his assistant. It was because Gerrick had the best performance at the audition. Since the other demi chefs didn't have any preference for the prep cooks, nobody cared much that Minjun took Gerrick.

"Let's do a final check. You can just serve the ravioli like this, as for the spaghetti with crushed peanuts, you can't crush the peanuts until you serve. Once the meatball becomes slightly warm, chop it up and put it on top of the lasagna. Don't forget to not season it too much. The lasagna jelly is already seasoned inside. Got it?"

"Yes, chef. Do not worry. I practiced all night."

"For doing that, you don't really have any dark circles. You look fine."

"I do have quite the stamina."

Jo Minjun smiled as he patted Gerrick's shoulder.

"Alright. I leave it in your hands."

Maybe it was a coincidence or maybe it was necessary, but all of the demi chefs used different molecular gastronomy techniques. Javier made a coffee foam sauce with a saffron creme anglaise, and Janet improved her film ravioli from before as her final dish. As for Anderson, he mixed egg whites with water and microwaved it, with a lemon creme made from broccolini powder sauce.

For only having ten days to prepare, the results were pretty decent. Maybe that was why, but Rachel and Rafael, who were standing in front of the crowd, had a more confident and energetic feel to them than normal. Rachel raised her voice.

"Thank you for joining us for this Rose Island tasting today. The items that you will be the first to taste are the works that my demi chefs have spent the last ten days preparing. After that, we will

give you a taste of Rafael's molecular ice cream."

"If you stay in your seats, the demi chefs themselves will come over to you and explain their dishes. Please wait patiently."

While Rachel and Rafael were explaining the upcoming tasting, Anderson looked around at the crowd. He saw many familiar faces. He quietly whispered to Jo Minjun.

"You see that grandpa with white hair over there."

"Yeah. Why?"

"He runs a one star restaurant downtown. And that Asian woman with the Chinese-style makeup, she is the owner of a two star restaurant."

".....Did they come to spy on us?"

"Honestly, us doing well won't affect their sales, but I'm sure it is on their mind. It is a legendary return. Even after closing its doors, Rose Island was selected as the restaurant representing LA, and they were all trying to take that position. Outside of sales, there is a matter of fame."

Jo Minjun nodded his head. To be called the best was fascinating no matter what world you were in.

The serving started. Thankfully, Gerrick was performing up to Minjun's expectations. Every time the rectangular plate with the three types of pasta went by, people had looks of amazement.

"It is amazing. Didn't you say you just started molecular gastronomy recently?"

"Although I started molecular gastronomy recently, I've been cooking for a while. I want to act modest and say I am still lacking quite a bit, but it feels odd to say that to a customer. Please enjoy."

"What order should I eat it in?"

"You should start with the green spaghetti. The smooth broth and the oily taste of the peanuts should feel nice in your mouth."

After that, please eat this lasagna. There is chili sauce and tomato paste mixed into the jelly, so even without any other sauce, just eating it with the meatball should have enough flavor. To finish it off is this ravioli made with fruits. It has fermented for a day, so the sweetness should be even stronger.”

Ironically, of the four demi chefs, the foreigner Jo Minjun was the best at handling customers. It wasn't a problem of enunciation or accent. Jo Minjun's face had Javier's gentle smile, Anderson's sincerity, and Janet's quiet mystique.

Jo Minjun knew what he needed to say. His short tenure as a English teacher might have added to his skillful handling of the customers.

The one thing that was for certain was that his attitude made the receiving party truly feel like they were being served. After listening to his gentle and calm explanation, they felt like they could just happily enjoy the complicated taste of molecular gastronomy.

How many customers must he have served like that? Jo Minjun grabbed a dish and headed to the next customer. It was a woman with dark brown hair, wearing a refreshing flower-patterned dress. Although she had on large sunglasses that covered half her face, no matter what kind of eyes were hidden behind those sunglasses, it felt like this woman would be a beauty. Jo Minjun smiled as he started to speak.

“Hollywood sure has a lot of beauties.”

“Thank you. Can I hear an explanation of the dish?”

It was a husky and nasal voice, as if she had a stuffy nose. Jo Minjun went through his memories for a second. He felt like he heard this voice before. Jo Minjun carefully placed the dish down before starting his explanation.

“This green spaghetti is jelly made with basil and chicken broth. I

put the crushed peanuts on the outside to add some oil. The lasagna is jelly made with chili sauce and tomato paste, and this ravioli is jelly made from a mixture of blue curacao and fruit juice. Inside it are pears and lime juice.”

“You seem happy.”

“I don’t know about any other time, but I feel like whenever I serve a dish I made to a customer, I should be excited and my heart should be fluttering. That is the way for the customer to enjoy my cooking as well.”

The woman smiled underneath the sunglasses at Jo Minjun’s answer. If it felt like that smile was kind of lonely, that would have been a mistake. Without knowing what kind of look was in the eyes, how could you find loneliness from just the corners of someone’s lips?

The woman started to speak.

“You are still the same.”

“.....What?”

The woman answered as if she knew Jo Minjun. Of course it would not be weird for her to know him since he has been on TV quite a bit, but the way she said it made it feel like she didn’t just see him on TV. It was at that moment. Jo Minjun felt like he could tell whose voice this woman’s voice was similar to.

The woman took off her sunglasses. The playful voice carefully entered Minjun’s ear.

“I didn’t think you would recognize me right awaybut you are too much. You can’t figure it out until the end?”

Jo Minjun’s voice started to shake.

“.....Chloe?”

Chapter 181: Taking the Initiative (3)

Hearing Jo Minjun's shaking voice, Chloe lightly smiled. She wanted to see his eyes shake from nervousness again. She wanted to hear his cautiously gentle, and soft and soothing voice once more.

The two of them tried to pretend like nothing happened after Grand Chef ended, but there was no way they could do that. Of course it wasn't that Jo Minjun avoided Chloe's calls or anything like that. Rather, he was even nicer than before, and she could tell that he was careful with every text he sent to make sure she wouldn't get hurt.

She was thankful for that. It meant that Jo Minjun cherished her enough to do that. But at the same time, it was torture. As a member of the opposite sex, the fact that the person you like needs to be cautious around you rather than be comfortable around you... would be difficult for anyone to handle.

"It's been a while. Have you been well?"

That was why Chloe tried to speak as casually as she could. If Chloe had a more manipulative personality, she could try to lean into Jo Minjun's gentleness... but she did not do that. She could not do that. Jo Minjun sat down next to Chloe and started to speak.

"How did you get here? You should have called me to let me know you were coming."

"I didn't want you to get nervous. The pasta is delicious. No, should I say the jelly is delicious?"

"Well, in the end it is a pasta. The jelly is just the ingredient."

Chloe nodded her head as she quietly put the pasta in her mouth. Jo Minjun debated for a moment. What could he say to make this awkward atmosphere disappear? But he felt like it would not disappear no matter what he said.

“Congratulations. I heard you are dating Kaya.”

“Yes, it ended up that way.”

“Just so you know, I am not saying it sarcastically or as a formality. I really am happy for you. You and Kaya are both my important friends.”

She wasn't forcing herself to say this. This really was Chloe's true feelings.

When she first found out that Kaya and Minjun were dating, Chloe's heart was crushed. It had no other choice. Of course she knew that something was fishy between the two of them from a long time ago, but the weight of that suspicion becoming reality held a completely different type of weight.

At first, she had no confidence to meet the two of them. Although she had not done anything wrong, she was embarrassed. She even really debated never contacting the two of them ever again, and live on like nothing had ever happened. But she could not do that. As she just told Minjun, Jo Minjun and Kaya were her important friends.

That was why Chloe had no choice but to say it.

“Don't worry. Minjun. I am not as innocent or pure as you think I am. My heart that I gave to you, I will take it back soon. So.....”

Suddenly, Chloe stopped talking. Maybe she put on some tint, but her lips were shining. But the reason Jo Minjun was looking at her lips was not because of the shininess. No, it was because of the way the corners of her lips were weakly shaking, which was telling him more than the things she just said to him.

“You don't need to worry about me from now on. A lot of time has passed. My heart has changed a lot as well.”

“Okay. I'll keep that in mind.”

It was a simple answer, but it did not mean he was taking Chloe's

words lightly. Rather, it was the greatest respect he could give to Chloe. He clearly felt Chloe's fear about destroying her friendships. Jo Minjun could not step on such feelings.

It was at that moment.

“Minjun! How dare you say that on starbook uh, Chloe?”

A familiar voice came from behind him. Jo Minjun suddenly felt like his heart skipped a beat and awkwardly looked behind him. Although he wasn't cheating or anything, just the fact that he was with Chloe made him feel like he did something wrong.

Thankfully, Kaya seemed to have been surprised at the fact that Chloe was there, and did not try to decipher Minjun's expression. Kaya started to tear up before pushing Minjun away and sitting next to Chloe.

“What is this. You always told me you were too busy to see me.”

“Sor, sorry.”

“I can't say anything since I was busy too. It's nice to see you.”

Kaya said that before giving Chloe a big hug. Chloe had a slightly nervous expression as she awkwardly put her arms around Kaya. She had also never expected Kaya to show up. Also, being in front of Kaya made her feel sorry as well. No matter how you put it, she had desired her friend's man. Jo Minjun looked toward Kaya as he asked.

“You said you were going to Dallas for the weekend. Is it done already? It's only Sunday.”

“I rushed back because I wanted to see you.”

Kaya smiled as she answered. Chloe watched the two of them with an embarrassed expression. Rather than being jealous, she was surprised. It was so unexpected. Even if they were dating, for that Kaya Lotus to show this type of affection and cuteness was something Chloe could have never expected.

“Chef Minjun! What are you doing!”

“.....Ah, I need to go back to work. Kaya, I’m sorry. You just got here but I have to go back. Catch up with Chloe for a while. Let’s talk once we’re done.”

“Ah. Jelly. Give it to me too.”

“Got it. Just wait a bit.”

Kaya, who was watching Minjun’s back as he walked away, smiled as she looked toward Chloe.

“Since we are both settled in now, we should be able to see each other often, right?”

“Yes. We should be able to. But work really is busy. I barely made time today. What about you, Kaya?”

“I am busy as well but.....I like it because it makes me feel like I am living and not wasting my life away. You know how I grew up.”

“I don’t think the old you was wasting your life away either. You were flailing with all your strength to survive. That was what made you become the wonderful chef you are today. That is why.....”

Chloe peeked toward Minjun. He was back to visiting customers and smiling as he explained the menu. In that moment, he seemed to have even forgotten about Chloe; the only things in his eyes as he greeted the customers were his passion and pride toward cooking. Chloe calmly continued to speak.

“You got a cool boyfriend like that too.”

“Hmm..... he really is, isn’t he? He’s cool in your eyes too, right? Chloe?”

“If it wasn’t for you, I might have snatched him for myself.”

“No. Minjun is mine.”

Chloe calmly smiled. She did not show any bitterness. She

planned on keeping the words she said to Minjun. Although she could not do anything about her true feelings, at least on the outside, she did not want to show any longing.

“Yes. Minjun is yours.”

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“Whose dish left the greatest impression?”

Rafael started to speak. Next to him were Rachel, Jack, Lisa, and lastly, Ella. Ella looked like she wanted to say something, but she had enough tact to not butt in on the adults’ conversation. Lisa caressed Ella’s hair as she started to speak.

“Honestly speaking, all of them left a great impression. You don’t get to try molecular gastronomy every day. I’m sure the people who tried these dishes feel the same. If you want to look for differences, you have to look for it not in the impression, but in the taste.”

“Mommy, I like the jelly uncle made the most.”

Ella whispered in a quiet voice in Lisa’s ear. She looked so innocent as she said that. Lisa lightly kissed Ella’s cheek. Ella opened her eyes wide as she asked her mom.

“Mommy, which one did you like the most?”

“Mommy.....”

Lisa took a look around the empty dishes. All four of them tasted wonderful. The texture that touched your tongue was great, and you could tell that they really researched their recipes. But as a baker, there could only be one she enjoyed the most.

“Mommy likes uncle Javier’s creme anglaise. I wonder how it would taste with bread.”

“I didn’t like that one.”

“It is because Ella is still young. When you grow up in the future, you’ll understand the acquired taste of it.”

“.....You always tell me I’m young. I’m all grown up.”

Ella puffed her cheeks and started to pout. Jack started to speak.

“I have never tried molecular gastronomy before it is refreshing. Rachel, I can see why you are interested in it. You always hated to stand still. Both in life, and in cooking.”

“So, Jack, which one do you like the most?”

“I feel the same way as Lisa. Any baker can’t help but have their hearts stolen by that type of creme.”

“I liked Janet’s film ravioli. Film is actually really annoying for beginners to handle but she managed to succeed with it. Chef Rachel, which one did you like?”

Rachel started to speak.

“I.....”

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While Rachel and the rest were judging the demi chefs’ molecular gastronomy dishes, there was another quiet judging going on at a different location. Well, since this was a gathering to judge the food, there really wasn’t anybody who was not judging.

But these two were a bit special. A man and a woman who seemed to be in their thirties. They did not seem to be a couple, but they shared a unique characteristic. It was the way they treated the food.

These two did not immediately put the food in their mouth like other people to start. They first used their eyes to see the angular beauty that the white space of the dish and the food created, then used their noses to enjoy the fragrance. It was only then that their tongues got a taste.

Their attitude toward the taste was a bit different as well. While most people would be debating whether it was good or bad, these two were having a conversation like this. The bald Asian man

wearing a suit with a fedora started to speak.

“Personally, I can see that a lot of effort was put into this ravioli. Alicia. What do you think?”

“I can see that the decorations were used with a purpose, not just as space fillers. The baby greens on the side have a purpose. The interesting texture from the crunchiness of the peanuts and the softness of the broth is held together by the crispiness of the leaves. Clever. Also, skillful. The one that made this was that female chef, right?”

“Yes. You like it?”

“Like it is too ambiguous. Honestly, it is molecular gastronomy they have been practicing for ten days. It would be weird to call it amazing. If you ask me if it is okay, I can confidently nod my head. If this is the result of ten days, by the time they open the restaurant, the level will be much much higher. The funny thing.....”

The woman called Alicia started to smile. She looked toward the plate on the table with a gaze full of amusement.

“Is that all of these are the works of the demi chefs. Not the sous chefs, but the demi chefs who have learned molecular gastronomy for ten or so days. Our seniors really were right when they said Rose Island is really different. Chen.”

“We can finally fulfill our desire. Now we won’t need to hear ‘You haven’t even been to the main Rose Island restaurant’ anymore.”

They must have been bugged about it a lot, as there was a sense of liberation in Chen’s gaze. Alicia nodded her head.

“That is that, but I wanted to verify it with my own eyes. The truth about the restaurant that made people say that three stars were not enough and that it needed four stars. I hope it is the same as before.”

“It is Rachel Rose and Rafael Yoon. In addition, they have Jo Minjun who is famous for his absolute taste. With a combination like that, won’t they do something crazy?”

Chen rolled Jo Minjun’s spaghetti on his fork and put it in his mouth. His body then shook with joy. The spaghetti, as well as the lasagna and ravioli, were perfect. He could not find anything missing. The texture of the jelly, the seasoning of the ingredients that ended up in it, and the type and harmony of the garnish on top. It really was the level of a Michelin star restaurant menu item.

“.....Wow, this person really does have absolute taste. Otherwise, it would be impossible to so meticulously express this kind of taste. Personally, I think Minjun’s dish can be put on the menu right away. Not a small dish like an amuse-bouche, but as a full on appetizer.”

“It really is surprising. Just ten days, and for a twenty one year old to show this much skill.....I can’t imagine what kind of monster he will become in the future.”

“Rose Island has always been full of geniuses. There are even talks about how the reason everybody on the Rose Division became successful without an exception is because they never take people without talent in the first place.”

Chen mumbled in an excited voice, as if his heart was pounding.

“But Jo Minjun is the first genius Rachel personally recruited. What do you think that means?”

“Does it mean that he has overwhelming talent even among her disciples?”

“Yes. Number one disciple. And think about how most teachers treat their number one disciples.”

Alicia tilted her head with a confused expression. But it did not take long for her face to be filled with shock. She started to mumble as if she had not even considered the following.

“Perhaps..... Rose Island?”

“Rachel Rose is a widow. She also has no children.”

Chen turned his head. His eyes chased after Jo Minjun who was making his way through the crowd of people. He then continued to speak in a meaningful voice.

“It would not be weird.....even if she was thinking of that young man as the successor to pass everything down to.”

Chapter 182: Taking the Initiative (4)

“.....Leave everything for him?”

Alicia looked at Chen in disbelief. Chen just shrugged his shoulders with a casual expression.

“It’s just something that’s brought up a lot in the industry these days. Nobody has any proof it would happen. But isn’t it quite believable?”

“It’s true. I feel like I’ve heard something similar as well. They said that once Rachel Rose passes away, each of the branch locations of Rose Island may be passed to the individual head chefs. Does that mean that she wants to pass this Venice location to Jo Minjun.....?”

“Honestly, it is quite impossible right now as he is just starting out. Plus, we don’t know if it would just be the Venice location or he might even be in charge of all locations..... we just don’t know yet.”

“If what you’re saying is true.....”

Alicia looked toward Jo Minjun with a curious expression. That young man might become the owner of Rose Island, which controls a good portion of the culinary world. It was all just possibilities and suspicions right now, but she couldn’t help it that her heart was pounding.

“I also heard that Mr. Jeremy has a lot of expectations for him.”

“.....That difficult old man?”

“I guess Minjun is a jewel that even such a difficult man cannot complain about.”

Alicia put the last pasta in her mouth. It was the ravioli. She started to smile as the fruit juice flowed out of the jelly and refreshingly washed down her throat.

“And Rachel Rose will be the one to train him.”

€

The tasting event ended. Everybody was given time to place their votes, but the results were not revealed in front of the audience. This wasn't a broadcast afterall. Rachel announced the results will be revealed at Rose Island, and that led to an unexpected situation.

“.....Kaya is still the same.”

Chloe did not know whether to laugh or not, so she just had a confused expression as she started to speak. Jo Minjun just scratched his cheek with embarrassment. Rachel had told Kaya and Chloe that they were welcome to come take a tour of Rose Island. That was how they ended up in the hall, and as they were standing in that small area, the inevitable meeting had no choice but to happen.

“.....Your makeup is too thick.”

“It's okay to have a lot of makeup on. It looks pretty.”

“It doesn't even look that pretty.”

Ella answered with a puffed up expression. It was like Kaya and Ella knew how they were going to treat each other from the moment they met, so they naturally ended up in that type of situation. Kaya had heard about Ella from Minjun, and Ella already knew a lot about Kaya through the media.

All of the kitchen family were focused on this entertaining conversation. Even Rachel and Lisa were touching their chins and looking toward them, but Ella and Kaya were not caring about the gazes of others right now. Ella was young and Kaya was young as well. In a slightly different manner than Ella.

“You know, I was recently ranked second among the prettiest chefs in the US.”

But Ella did not back down. She puffed her chest and stomach as

she confidently answered.

“You couldn’t even get first place. I got first place in the Kindergarten beauty contest.”

“Hey. Look at her.”

Kaya pointed to Chloe and loudly started to speak.

“Answer me honestly. Do you have any confidence that you’ll be prettier than her?”

For reference, Chloe had received first place in that ranking. Compared to Kaya, Chloe had a completely pure charm about her. It wasn’t a really influential ranking, but Kaya brought it up a couple times to Minjun as well. ‘Remember that you are dating the second most beautiful woman in the industry.’ Something along those lines.

Ella took a peek at Chloe before flinching a bit and frowning her lips. She has a reason to grumble toward Kaya, but she had no reason to do so to Chloe. She didn’t have the heart or the confidence to be mean to her. In the end, Ella approached Minjun and held his hand tightly.

“Uncle. That lady is being mean to me.”

“Hey you, remove your hand. He’s my man.”

Kaya quickly walked over and tried to take Minjun’s hand away. But Ella was holding on tightly and did not want to let go. Jo Minjun had a bitter smile as he looked toward Kaya.

“Kaya. Ella is a kid. Don’t be too angry.”

“Just whose side are you on? My side? Or her side?”

“I just don’t want to see my girlfriend fighting with a kid.”

“.....You make me have nothing to say.”

Kaya stepped back while sulking. Ella stuck her tongue out while looking at Kaya sulking, but thankfully, the argument did not start

up again. Lisa started to speak in a stern voice.

“Ella. Come here.”

“.....I didn’t do anything wrong.”

“I didn’t say you were in trouble. But if you keep standing there, you will be in trouble. Come over here.”

Ella let go of Jo Minjun’s arm with a disappointed expression as she grumbled and walked toward Lisa. Lisa’s stern voice could be heard by everyone before Rachel coughed to get their attention.

“I think everyone has had enough time to enjoy the appetizers, so now I suppose we need to announce the results. How should I do it? Take some time and build up the reveal or should I just flat out say it?”

Javier shouted.

“Just do it flat out.”

“That’s what I thought. You young people are always so impatient. As so, Javier, you are last place.”

“.....What?”

Javier had a blank expression on his face before he had a grin thinking it was a lie.

“Ay. Chef. Do not joke like that. Why would I be last place?”

“An anglaise with coffee foam. It wasn’t bad. But it didn’t have much impact. It was a dish fitting more to be an amuse-bouche.”

“.....For joking, you have quite a thorough explanation.”

“I am not joking. Good work. Unfortunately, it looks like you won’t be getting the section you want.”

Janet’s face brightened up after hearing that. Javier was the only other person who wanted the appetizer section. The fact that Javier was last place meant that as long as she wasn’t in first place, the appetizer section was hers.

Janet had a mischievous grin as she started to speak to Javier.

“Thank you. For giving me the appetizer section.”

“.....Ah, ah!”

Javier flopped down on the chair with a look of despair. Since the situation was like this, now it just mattered who got first place. Kaya put her chin on Jo Minjun’s shoulder as she whispered quietly.

“You’re confident you got first place, right?”

“.....I am confident, but I really hope I got second.”

“No. Get first.”

“Then I need to do molecular gastronomy.”

“It’s fun and cool. Learn it well so you can make it for me in the future.”

Jo Minjun did not respond. He looked at Rachel with a nervous heart. Rachel continued to speak.

“Third place is Anderson. Good work. Personally, I enjoyed your dish the most. It was a perfect broccolini.”

“Thank you.”

Anderson answered in a calm voice. He looked to be neither happy nor sad. He should be sad because he worked hard for the competition and didn’t do well, but as long as Minjun didn’t get second place and pick pasta, that section was going to be his.

With the situation like this, Janet was nervous again. If she ended up in first place, there was no appetizer section for her. It wasn’t that she hated molecular gastronomy, but there was one thing she learned from studying molecular gastronomy the last ten days. Molecular gastronomy needed a lot of precision work, and that

‘Is annoying.’

Molecular gastronomy was very scientific cooking. That meant that if you even made a slight mistake in measurement, it can ruin the whole dish. Of course that was the same when it came to something like baking, but measurement wasn't the only issue in molecular gastronomy.

For example, if you look at Jo Minjun's jelly pasta, you needed to use a syringe or hose to push air in and remove the noodle. In Janet's dish, you had to poke a syringe in the film to insert the broth. There were many instances where she ruined the dish because the film ripped in the process.

There were many aspects of molecular gastronomy that were extremely sensitive, almost as if you were doing a surgery. Even if it took the same amount of time, it required more concentration and stamina than any other section. That was what molecular gastronomy required. Jo Minjun slightly whispered to Kaya.

"If I end up with molecular gastronomy, I'll be too tired to meet up with you."

"I get dragged here and there all the time without complaining."

"This is a different kind of tiring."

"Stop whining. If you get tired, I will recharge you. Like this."

Kaya suddenly kissed Jo Minjun on the cheek. Jo Minjun gulped with a nervous expression. Even if she settled her heart, he was still worried that Chloe would be hurt. Jo Minjun mumbled in a quiet voice.

"People are watching. What are you doing all of a sudden."

"Recharging. Plus, weren't you the one who didn't care about people watching?"

He had nothing to say. Minjun just quietly looked toward Rachel. Rachel smiled as she started to speak.

"Is your lover's quarrel finished?"

“.....I’m sorry.”

“No need to be sorry. Love often serves as motivation for artists. Especially for something like molecular gastronomy which is full of freshness, it will become an even greater strength.”

“Haha. Teacher. You make it sound like I’m going to be handling molecular gastronomy.”

Rachel smiled again as she answered.

“Congratulations. You are the winner.”

€

“.....This is probably the first and last time in my life I will ever feel so weird about being the winner.”

Jo Minjun mumbled in a sad voice. Evening. Jo Minjun was at Kaya’s residence. Of course it was not just him. Anderson, Chloe, and Kaya were with him.

There was no other option. Chloe was sharing a house with her agent, and Anderson’s house had Amelia and Fabio. Minjun’s house had Rachel. Not that they couldn’t have guests over at their places, but there would still have been a sense of discomfort.

In the end, Kaya’s place was the only place they could go without any hesitation. Kaya bit into a pizza that was loaded with cheese as she started to speak.

“Why. How great is molecular gastronomy? It’s something you can’t even do in most places because they don’t have the equipment. Plus, you can even pick the prep cook of your choice. There’s a benefit to being the winner.”

“.....I wanted to work the main. I was drawn to pasta as well.”

“Don’t even dream about it. Pasta is mine.”

“Quiet down, third place.”

Anderson was about to say something in anger, but just mumbled

to himself as he started to drink his coke. Chloe smiled like a baby as she started to speak.

“But it’s still good. For the four of us to be together like this. It reminds me of the old days.”

“It’s so weird to call it the old days. It has only been a few months since the competition ended.”

“But it still feels like it’s been so long. There’s been quite a lot that has happened since then.”

“I guess. Kaya became the national Cinderella Chef, while Chloe became the most beautiful chef in the country.”

“.....Don’t do that. It’s embarrassing.”

“What will Kaya do if you’re embarrassed. She was showing off so much that she came in second place.”

Kaya choked on her pizza and punched Minjun on the side. Her cheeks turned red as she started to shout.

“When did I do that?! I never showed off!”

“What you said to Ella earlier today was showing off.”

“That’s because she is a kid. I was being childish to be at her level. Meet people at their level. Have you never heard of that?”

“I don’t think you were meeting her at her level. I think the two of you are just at the same level.”

At Jo Minjun’s retort, Kaya looked toward him with a look full of grudge. Chloe quickly changed the topic.

“Anyways, it’s a good thing we have Kaya’s hotel. I was worried we would just have to walk around outside.”

“I think I’m going to rent a place soon too. I’m here for the long run now. But the cost of housing in this neighborhood is just too expensive.”

“It’s hard to find a decent place under \$1000 a month around

here. It might be cheaper if you share a room with someone else.....but honestly, I don't want to do that with a stranger."

"I don't need anything else other than it not having cockroaches."

Kaya spoke with a nervous expression. She looked toward Jo Minjun.

"I wish Minjun lived with me. Then he can catch all the cockroaches."

"No. I would run away."

".....Coward."

Kaya grumbled with a disappointed expression. Chloe started to speak.

"My agent is going to move out soon because she is getting married. My lease is almost up as well. Just thinking about finding a new place gives me a headache."

"Seriously. It would be good if we could all just live together."

Once Kaya said that, there was a moment of silence. Kaya looked confused before she slowly started to speak.

"Minjun, you said you don't plan on continuing to live in Rachel's house, right?"

"Yeah. As soon as I start getting paid, I'll need to find my own place. I can't continue to be a burden."

"Anderson, what about you....."

Kaya looked at Anderson for a bit before speaking as if she was doing him a favor.

"You said you want to get away from your parents and become independent as well."

"That is true but why? Perhaps....."

Kaya nodded her head. Her eyes sparkled as she looked at the

three of them.

“Should we all live together?”

Chapter 183: The power of science is amazing (1)

Kaya's words must have been shocking. Chloe, who had been drinking orange juice, started to choke. Kaya started to tap Chloe's back with a casual expression.

Jo Minjun could not figure out how he should respond to Kaya's words. If Kaya knew about Chloe's feelings, she probably would not have been able to say something like that so easily. But it wasn't like he could tell her about it. It could end up making the two of their friendship more awkward. Jo Minjun cautiously started to speak.

"I don't think that's something we can determine right now."

"I know. So let's start slowly thinking about it. We still have a lot of time."

They talked about a lot of other things after that, but the only thing on their minds when they left Kaya's hotel was about how she asked them to live together. At first, it was a bit nerve-wracking, but the more they thought about it, the more charming it started to sound. If there was a problem, it would be that

"Anderson. I'll take Minjun home. I have something to say to him. That's okay, right?"

Anderson nodded his head. He didn't point out the fact that Chloe's house was in the opposite direction.

Jo Minjun got into Chloe's car. Chloe started to speak in an embarrassed voice.

"Sorry. The car is too small."

Chloe's car was a 2-person Mini Cooper that was pretty small for a man to fit. Jo Minjun smiled as he started to respond.

"It's not too bad. It feels like I'm in a spaceship."

“Your teasing skills seemed to have gotten better.”

“It seems to get better naturally the more time I spend with Duksam.”

“.....Poor Anderson.”

A warm laughter filled the inside of the car. Jo Minjun decided to take the offense.

“You seem to have something you want to say. What is it? Is it about what Kaya said earlier?”

“There are many other things as well, but let’s take care of that first. Would you be okay with it? If we were to live together.”

Jo Minjun could not easily answer that question. Such a cautious question required a cautious answer. He needed to think about it. The path that would prevent both Kaya and Chloe from getting hurt. But if one of them had to end up getting hurt, then.....

“This might end up being the tool that returns our friendship to how it used to be.”

“It could also make it much worse.”

“I don’t plan to make it that way. I also believe that you would feel the same way.”

Rather than trusting, it was more of a ‘you have to do it’ type of tone. It was a Jo Minjun like decisiveness. The car stopped. They had arrived at Rachel Rose’s house. Chloe started to respond.

“You seem to trust me.”

Jo Minjun answered in a confident voice.

“I don’t trust all of my friends like this. But Chloe, I trust you. You are not the type of person to hurt others.”

Chloe did not respond. She just had a faint smile on her lips as she slowly started to speak.

“Have a good night. Later, we”

“Okay. Call me once you figure things out. Thanks for bringing me home.”

Jo Minjun opened the door and stepped out. Chloe started to mumble to herself as she quietly watched Jo Minjun’s back.

“.....He doesn’t even look back once.”

€

Kaya’s proposal did not make Minjun’s head complicated. Well, to be more specific, he didn’t have the time to let it complicate his head. Rafael made Jo Minjun memorize tens, no hundreds of molecular gastronomy recipes that Minjun could have never even imagined being possible. At the same time, he had a different type of homework. He didn’t think it would be difficult, but it was more annoying than he expected.

“.....So, there is still nobody who wants to do molecular gastronomy?”

Jo Minjun asked in a depressed voice. All of the prep cooks were working hard not to make eye contact with Minjun and kept their mouths shut. If you think about it, it was to be expected. All of the demi chefs tried their best to avoid molecular gastronomy, so would the prep cooks be any different?

It made more sense that the prep cooks tried to avoid molecular gastronomy even more. The job of the prep cooks was to prepare the food for the demi chef in their area. If the demi chef puts the finishing touches, that means that the prep cooks had to be responsible for everything up to that finishing touch.

This meant that they needed to do all of those complicated and delicate processes. There was nobody who would welcome such job. That led to the current result. He told all of them to step forward if they decided they wanted to volunteer for the molecular gastronomy section, but there was nobody who volunteered.

Jo Minjun let out a sigh.

“Why are you all so scared of molecular gastronomy? In the end, it is a type of cooking. The only difference with traditional cooking is that you approach it in a more scientific way.”

“.....You say that chef, but didn't you not want molecular gastronomy either?”

[“I was in liberal arts.”](#)

It was a confident answer. Jo Minjun said that as he looked at Maya.

“Maya. Liberal arts or science?”

“I studied art.”

“Gerrick, what about you?”

“Liberal arts.”

“Antonio?”

“I was an athlete.”

“.....Fred, answer.”

“Science but my grades were really bad! I swear!”

Jo Minjun looked at them with a frustrated expression. Javier was having a hard time holding back his laughter on the side. He started to chuckle as he whispered to Janet.

“For the first place to have this much trouble. Isn't the world so ironic?”

“For the last place to be this happy, it is indeed ironic.”

“.....I'm still working main you know? In most restaurants, it is the most popular section.”

“Yes. You are amazing. Last place.”

He knew it would repeat like this even if this conversation dragged out longer. As Janet mentioned, in the end, he did get the last place. Javier looked back at Minjun with a bitter expression.

Jo Minjun was saying all sorts of things to the prep cooks right now. Rather than forcing someone to work with him, it seemed like he wanted someone to volunteer on their own. The problem was that there was nobody who wanted to be the sacrificial sheep.

“Gerrick. You told me that you wanted to be a chef like me. Then wouldn’t you learn the most by working by my side?”

“In order to see the forest instead of the tree, it is better to be at a decent distance.”

“.....You sure know how to talk.”

Honestly speaking, there were only two prep cooks Jo Minjun was interested in. Gerrick, and Maya. In Gerrick’s case, his foundation was a bit better than the other three. As for Maya, it was because of her hands. The small hands that women tend to have given an advantage when doing precision work like molecular gastronomy.

“I have no other choice. I wanted to be a gentleman and settle this with words, but I guess not. Maya. Gerrick. One of you will be my assistant. You two come to a decision on who that will be. I cannot wait any longer. Your deadline is tomorrow.”

Maya and Gerrick looked at each other with a nervous expression. Jo Minjun put the mental battle between the two of them behind him as he headed to the kitchen. Rafael, who had been watching him, chuckled as he started to speak.

“How is it? Do you now understand how I was feeling?”

“.....I guess so. I think I was a bit too much.”

“Molecular gastronomy is like that. Even if you start it because you want to, it is so complicated and annoying that it is easy to drop. But Minjun, I will tell you something that will give you some hope.”

Rafael brought his lips close to Minjun’s ear.

“At least among the four demi chefs, you have the most talent for molecular gastronomy.”

“.....How do you determine that? Because of the results of the tasting?”

“I have a decent understanding of your cooking style. You are interested in how ingredients work together in harmony. Rather than being a master of one type of cooking, you want to combine all sorts of methods to create a new type of cuisine. To put it simply, you have a lot of creativity. You have the soul of an artist. And for molecular gastronomy, that creativity is the most important.”

Jo Minjun answered with a stiff expression.

“You’re praising me quite a bit. You’re giving so many carrots that I’m afraid about when the stick will come.”

Rafael chuckled as he answered.

“Shouldn’t be that long now.”

€

“Here. What about this house? It’s in Mar Vista. The location is pretty good for everyone..... I guess somewhere in Beverly Hills is better?”

“.....The house seems to be the only thing on your mind these days.”

“Of course. Just thinking about it makes my heart beat faster.”

Kaya’s cheeks turned red as she answered. Jo Minjun pulled on Kaya’s cheeks as he started to speak.

“Chloe needs to answer first.”

“I thought Chloe would be the first to agree to live together.”

“Be understanding. Something like a house is something you need to think hard about.”

Kaya leaned on Minjun's shoulder with a disappointed expression. But she quickly moved her head in shock. Rachel was coming in toward the kitchen. In her hands was a pot full of paella. Jo Minjun's eyes started to sparkle.

[Lemon Paella with Shrimps and Scallops]

Freshness: 89%

Origin: (Hidden due to too many ingredients)

Quality: High

Cooking score: 9/10

‘.....How does she make a 9 point dish with such simple combination?’

She either put it through a special process, or her prepping skills were each at the master level that it was possible. Rachel smiled softly as she started to speak.

“Minjun seems to be wanting to eat rich dishes these days so I put in some effort. Kaya, do you like paella too?”

“There are not many things I don't like. Thank you for the meal.”

Kaya smiled as she responded. That smile made him think about the past. Her thorny appearance made her seem as pretty as a rose, but this pure lotus-like appearance was pretty too. Although the roots might be in the mud deep in the bottom of the pond, now, she had bloomed beautifully.

Eating the paella with that smile serving as the pickle, he felt like he could taste the dish more clearly. These days, he had been eating high-level food often like it was fast food, but appreciation for delicious food did not go away even after a long time.

Salty yet sweet. At the same time, a spicy fragrance that accompanied the shrimps and scallops. Paella was known for the unique texture it created, with the seafood and vegetables seeping

into the rice that just eating the rice alone made it feel like you were eating it all together.

“Wow.....it is really good.”

Kaya was full of admiration. Rachel smiled gently as she responded.

“I can’t feed terrible food to my disciple’s girlfriend.”

“Thank you for inviting me over. I was kind of nervous at first.”

“I like that you are honest. So, you are running a restaurant in LA these days?”

“I’m not really running it. There is a different head chef actually running the show. I am more of a mascot.....and menu developer.”

Kaya shrugged her shoulders as she answered. There was no shame in her response. At her age, just coming this far was really good already. Rachel nodded her head.

“There is no need to worry about a title like head chef. The important thing is whether you can cook or not. At your age, you just need to do whatever you can to stand in a kitchen. Then your skills will go up naturally.”

“.....Teacher, when you were young, weren’t they terrible to female chefs? How did you survive?”

“With an attitude.”

Rachel put her spoon into the paella as she fell into thought. Memories. The faintness of someone being nostalgic filled her eyes. She slowly started to continue.

“If they would cuss at me or annoying me, I returned it ten times as much. Although that did lead to my being kicked out quite a few times. In fact, later on, I was cut from many interviews after being called crazy. Then I ended up in the restaurant my husband was working as a sous chef.....”

“And you fell in love.”

“No. I fell into shock. I was pretty egotastic back then. I thought that all male chefs bragged about their skills but couldn’t really back it up. But he was different. It was shocking, and it made me angry. I wanted to surpass himbut before I realized it, rather than surpassing him, I had become his partner.”

The soft smile remained on Rachel’s lips. Jo Minjun felt like he could understand where Rachel was coming from. His feelings about Kaya were not much different. There were many times he felt small compared to her abilities, to the overwhelming gap between them, and was angered by it. Rachel continued to speak.

“I hope the two of you can become that type of relationship as well. Being each other’s stimulus, pushing and pulling each other as needed.”

“It would be good if that can happen.”

“At times, you might not say something because you are thinking that it might worry the other person. And there will be times where it will be smarter not to say anything. But sometimes, those secrets can kill you inside. If you are hurting, tell them you are hurting. If something is hard, tell them what you’re going through. Sorry. I never wanted to become so preachy, but I seem to talk more the older I get.”

“No. It is very good advice. I will always remember it.”

Jo Minjun smiled as he answered. Kaya seemed to be deep in thought at Rachel’s words. Jo Minjun sent a confused expression toward Kaya.

“What’s up? Is there something going on?”

“Well.....it is a bit embarrassing to say.”

Kaya’s expression became weird. It looked a bit embarrassed, and a bit bitter. Once she started to speak, Minjun’s eyes turned into a glare.

“Maybe it is because I’m popular. How should I call it? An

obsessed fan? I seem to have one of those.”

“.....What?”

“Ah, don’t take it so seriously. I just get random text messages from time to time. You know. Love you, Kaya! Sleep well. Those types of messages.”

“What kind of crazy bastard does that to another man’s woman.....”

“You don’t even know if its a guy or girl. And don’t worry. I’m good at fighting.”

Kaya clenched her fists as she said that. Of course, saying that did not loosen Minjun’s expression at all.

Rachel was the same. Rachel looked outside before starting to speak.

“It’s already dark. Kaya. Are you busy tomorrow?”

“No. Nothing special, just going to work at the restaurant like normal.”

Rachel nodded her head.

“Good. Then why don’t you spend the night? I will allow it for today as the owner of the house.”

In Korea, in your sophomore year of High School, you decide whether you will be in the department of liberal arts, or department of science.

Chapter 184: The power of science is amazing (2)

“What?”

Kaya blanked for a second before looking toward Rachel. She understood the meaning of Rachel’s and her face turned red.

“Why? You two are dating anyway. Is there a problem?”

“That, us, we.....haven’t.....that.....I’m not ready.....”

Maybe it was difficult for Kaya to put that into words, but she was getting flustered as she started to avoid Rachel’s gaze. Rachel’s started to smile as she responded.

“I’m just joking. There are many rooms so pick whichever one you would like. They each have a restroom attached so you can wash as you like as well.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

Kaya answered with an awkward expression. Rachel smile as she looked at Minjun.

“I heard you plan on living with Kaya and the other kids when you leave the house.”

“We haven’t discussed it in detail yet.....we’re just thinking about it.”

“It’s disappointing. You being here made it not feel so empty.”

“.....I’m sad about it as well. I was so happy getting to eat teacher’s cooking every so often.”

He was being honest. Rachel’s cooking never lets anybody down. The dishes that Rachel created went above and beyond. Rachel smiled once more as she responded.

“If I knew you liked it so much, I should have cooked for you more often.”

“I can’t ask you to do that when you are tired. Plus, food tastes better the longer you wait between each time you eat it.”

“But nobody enjoys that waiting period. Even epicureans. Although it is a slightly different story if you are full.”

Jo Minjun nodded at Rachel’s words. The impact of that short waiting period was strong, but it was difficult to be patient.

A few hours later, Jo Minjun had to be patient in a different way. On top of the bed. Kaya was squirming as she was staring at his face. Her hair was slightly wet as she just got out of the shower, and since she didn’t have a change of clothes, she was wearing one of his t-shirts and shorts.

“.....You’re doing it on purpose, aren’t you? You’re very seductive right now.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“You have your own bedroom. Why are you here?”

“I’m not sleepy yet. So, I might as well take the chance to see your face as much as I can. You can sleep if you want. I like your sleeping face too.”

“How can I go to sleep with you staring at me like that?”

Jo Minjun smiled bitterly as he reached out his arm. His fingers, which were started to develop calluses, slowly caressed Kaya’s cheek and chin. As the top of his fingers started to brush against her slightly wet hair, Kaya started to smile.

“My hair is much better now I wash it frequently. Thanks, to a certain someone.”

“You don’t like washing it often?”

“That’s not the important part. The important part is that I wash it often for you.”

“.....Isn’t the important part that if it wasn’t for me, you’re so dirty you wouldn’t even wash your hair?”

“Do you not like it that such a dirty girl is your girlfriend?”

“I’m not sure. Just because I like you doesn’t mean I have to like everything about you.”

Once he said that Kaya’s eyes rolled up a bit as if she was thinking before she started to smile and got closer to Minjun. There was a light fruity scent coming from Kaya’s body. Rather than her scent, it was more likely the fragrance of the shampoo and lotion, but it still made him wonder if there was fruit juice instead of blood in Kaya’s body. Jo Minjun slowly started to speak.

“Wasn’t that the timing to get angry?”

“No. After thinking about it, I decided I like your answer. If you like me even though you don’t like everything about me, that means that even though there are things about me you don’t likeyou will continue to like me. Now I can relax and be as mean as I want.”

“.....How do you come up with such logic?”

Jo Minjun just started to laugh in disbelief. Kaya smiled brightly as she looked at Minjun’s smiling face before slowly starting to speak.

“I’m sorry.”

“About what?”

“That.....normal couples would have done everything by this point. But we haven’t even reached that final stage.”

Jo Minjun did not say anything. The reason that Kaya did not want to take it to that final level, specifically, the reason she was afraid of that level was simple. Kaya knew very well the results of an unprepared male-female relationship.

Even though her father showed up again after 20 years, his past 20 years were a path of thorns. How must a man who could not even protect his family, live his life? Kaya did not want to be like

her dad. She did not want to be like her mom either. To create a family, that was for when everything was settled. She wanted to push it back until then.

Of course, having sex was not the same as creating a family. There were many prevention methods. But the reason Kaya had a difficulty with that type of act, Jo Minjun could understand it. Kaya continued in a nervous voice.

“Is it hard to hold back? If so, I

“Kaya.”

Jo Minjun put his hand on Kaya’s cheek. It was just his palm, but Kaya felt like the entire Earth was holding her in its arms. Kaya lifted up her gaze. Jo Minjun’s eyes were warmly embracing her. He started to speak.

“If you take out the pasta before it is cooked because you are hungry, that pasta cannot bring joy to anybody. Neither to the chef nor the customer. For me, even if our relationship is slightly frustrating, I want it to be cooked properly, to the point that there is not an ounce of imperfection when it gets on the plated. Yes. You are right. It is hard to resist. But, if we don’t do things because it is hard and do things we shouldn’t doour life will not have any taste to it.”

“Do you really feel that way?”

“Yes. I have always hated waiting, but I will wait. Kaya Lotus is my favorite chef. I’m sure she will bring me a dish that is beyond my expectation.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Kaya lifted her head up and kissed Jo Minjun. She then started to speak in a slightly teary voice.

“That is just the appetizer. It won’t make you full but just wait. The main will not take that long. I promise.”

“Everything is fine, but

Jo Minjun laughed mischievously.

“Is there only one appetizer?”

Kaya’s face started to fill with a smile. She put both of her hands on Jo Minjun’s cheeks. Their noses were touching, and they could feel each other’s breaths.

“No. I can even give you a hundred.”

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In the end, although Rachel had given Kaya her own room, she ended up spending the night in Jo Minjun’s bed. Jo Minjun was the first to open his eyes. He just quietly looked at Kaya’s sleeping face.

To feel your heart getting warmer just looking at someone’s face, this was not something he ever expected was possible for himself. He could not believe that you could have someone so deep in your mind. But Kaya had turned into that type of person for him.

‘If we end up living together will I be able to look at her like this every morning?’

Well, thinking more about it, if they were living with Chloe and Anderson as well, it could be a different story since the two of them will not be able to share a room. Thinking about it that way, he even wondered if it would be better if Anderson and Chloe rejected the offer. And then, he realized that the person that just had that kind of thought was very foreign to him.

How long must he have been watching her like that? Kaya who seemed to have been enjoying a meal in her dream slowly opened her eyes and looked around.

“Minjun ah. Right. I slept here.”

“Yes. Did you sleep well?”

“I slept well, but my lips feel really swollen. I think I overdid it a bit.”

“It’s not just your lips. I think your whole face is swollen.”

“Don’t say that. You are my boyfriend. You have to tell me even my swollen face looks pretty.”

“I never said it looked ugly. Just swollen. I was just telling the truth.”

“.....You are too good with words.”

Kaya said that as she rubbed her face at Jo Minjun’s neck. Jo Minjun patted her back as he started to speak.

“Wake up. Time to go to work.”

“Groan.....wha time is it?”

“Almost 7.”

“Liar. Tell me the time down to the minutes. It doesn’t feel like it’s 7 yet.”

“6:47.”

“Okay. Then let me stay like this for 3 more minutes.”

“After 3 minutes, I feel like you’ll ask to do it for 10 more minutes.”

“Then let me do this for 13 more minutes. Why, you don’t like it?”

Kaya put on some puppy dog eyes as she asked. Jo Minjun looked at her acting like that and replied.

“You have eye boogers.”

“That’s okay. Even my eye boogers are pretty. I told you. I am the second most beautiful chef in the US.”

“You must really be proud of that.”

“I’m not that proud of it. Just a little more than winning Grand Chef?”

“.....You can’t handle yourself because you’re so happy about it.”

Jo Minjun smiled as he caressed Kaya's head. Kaya just quietly looked at Jo Minjun's neck. The burn mark was light or dark based on the area. When he wears a chef's coat, the majority of it would be covered because of the collar, but it was completely visible when he was wearing a regular t-shirt like this. Kaya started to speak in an upset voice.

"What if you got surgery for this? Or maybe a tattoo to cover it up."

"I told you I'm not embarrassed about this. It is a scar of honor."

"Still.....just seeing it makes me really sorry."

"Don't be sorry. You've done quite a lot for me. This kind of burn, I feel like it's not much in comparison."

".....I always feel like I haven't done anything for you, but you always say I did a lot for you."

"You helped me dream."

".....I did?"

Jo Minjun quietly nodded his head. He wanted to explain everything to Kaya who tilted her head in confusion. He wanted to tell her about how he came from the future, as well as how he had the power of the system. He wanted Kaya to be the bamboo forest he could spill his secrets too. But this was not the time. Kaya was busy enough with her own problems. Jo Minjun picked up his smartphone instead of responding.

"Alright. Wake up now. It's 7:00 am. You need to get to work."

"5 more minutes, no 3 more. You know I have a headache, and my stomach hurts"

"If it is something that can get better in 3 minutes, you aren't even sick. Get up."

Kaya started to pout.

".....No fun."

“Chef, you seem to be in a good mood today.”

That was the first thing Maya said as soon as he entered the store. Jo Minjun peeked toward her before started to speak in a stern voice.

“Mood is something that can go from really good to really bad in an instant. So, Maya. You seem to have something to tell me..... what is it? Is it something that’ll make me feel good, or is it something that will make me feel sad?”

“Umm.....I don’t know if chef will be happy about this. I have decided to be your assistant.”

“Oh. Is that so? I guess the two of you were able to come to a decision. How did Gerrick convince you?”

“.....Our ancestors have left us a good legacy. If something cannot be determined by your mind, isn’t it best to leave it to rock paper scissors?”

“So. Did you come because you won or because you lost?”

Maya could not answer and just started to roll her eyes around. Jo Minjun let out a sigh.

“You lost, didn’t you.”

“I, I’m sorry. But I will really work properly!”

Jo Minjun looked at Maya with a blank stare that made it impossible to figure out what he was thinking. Maya must not have had the confidence to meet his gaze as she quickly lowered her head and started to fidget. Jo Minjun soon opened his mouth. Maya’s feelings, he actually understood it better than anybody else.

“It will be difficult and annoying. You might even think you had no luck with picking a section. But I will at least make you feel like you had good luck with your demi-chef. Let’s work well together. I

will give it my best.”

“.....Yes! Thank you. Chef.”

“Why are you thanking me when I haven’t even done anything? Let’s first go inform the sous chef. He should be waiting.”

“Yes!”

Maya answered with an energetic voice and followed behind Jo Minjun. She had all sorts of negative thoughts when she lost the rock, paper, scissors, but after thinking it over, she decided that it wasn’t too bad. No matter what, Jo Minjun was a talented demi-chef. He was also a one of a kind chef in the world. Someone with absolute taste better than anyone else.

‘I will make all of Minjun chef’s know-hows into mine.’

With Maya having that type of thought, the two of them entered the office. Rafael was not the only one in the office. Rachel and Isaac were also there, as they looked toward Minjun while still sitting. Jo Minjun cautiously started to speak.

“Should I come back later?”

“No. That’s okay. Come over here. This is something you should hear as well.”

“Me?”

“Minjun. Of the elements, a restaurant must have, if you take out service and taste, what would be left?”

“.....Is there anything else you need other than those two? I can’t think of anything else.”

At Minjun’s answer, Isaac answered in a voice of a veteran businessman.

“It is the image.”

“Image?”

“You can also call it fame. The things that people are looking for

in Rose Island, it is not just delicious food. Food made my Rachel Rose. Food made from a world-class restaurant that has never fallen from its Michelin Three-star rating. Chef Minjun. The image of the Rose Island you see right now. How is it?”

Jo Minjun started to think. He started to speak in a cautious voice.

“It is a legend. The main location of the many Rose Islands around the world. The words the ‘main location’ always had a special ring to it. Teacher Rachel’s old reputation will be on people’s minds as well.”

“Yes. You are correct. It is a legend. And legends are always in people’s memories, not in the present. What I mean to say is that it remains in the past. People might think that our main location.....”

“They may look down on it.”

Rachel finished Isaac’s sentence. She started to speak in a quiet voice.

“This is the homework we must complete. People are always like that. They always have two types of expectations. They will be as amazing as the past. They will not be able to live up to the past. We need to get past both of those expectations. We need to show them that we have gotten much better than the past and much different.”

“.....I like what you are saying. But how are you planning on showing that?”

“There is a cooking competition in Los Angeles soon. Every year, all sorts of restaurant chefs throughout Los Angeles enter. It is a competition to determine their ranking. In addition, while Rose Island was open, it never lost the winner’s trophy.”

Rachel’s eyes were shining sharply. She continued to speak like a commander getting ready for war.

“We must take what we must take this time as well.”

Chapter 185: The power of science is amazing (3)

“There is no need to be nervous. However, you cannot be relaxed either. Everyone is paying attention to us right now. All you have to do is make those uncertain gazes change their minds at once.”

Jo Minjun just quietly nodded his head at Rafael’s statement. The request was simple. Right now, they did not need PR; what they needed was verification. In fact, if you considered everything, there really was no point to any additional PR.

Grand Chef Runner-Up Anderson. Absolute Taste Jo Minjun. Creator of Molecular Gastronomy Food Truck, Rafael Yoon. Plus the Memorable Legend Rachel Rose. There probably weren’t many restaurants throughout the United States to have so many famous people working together.

What Rachel wanted to do was destroy the question ‘How great can they be?’ And winning this competition would be a strong statement to show their level.

The rules of the competition were simple. 4 people in one team. The cooking category was team’s choice. The time limit was 30 minutes. The demi chef all had casual expressions as Rachel explained the details. Well, to be specific, until Rachel said the following.

“The four of you will be the ones to participate in the competition.”

“What?”

Even Jo Minjun could not help but be surprised at her words. His jaw dropped as he looked towards Rachel. Javier started to speak in a nervous voice.

“But there is no such restriction in the rules. Wouldn’t the other restaurants send their best four, regardless of whether they were

demi chefs or sous chefs?”

“There are places that send their best like that. For some of them, they might not have the numbers to do anything else. However, that is not the case for us. Rafael and I will be doing more with our eyes and mouth than our hands. The four of you will be the ones to cook all of the food. That is why the four of you have to represent us in the competition as well. The food that you make in the competition is the food that our customers will be eating.”

It made sense. Jo Minjun was in awe. He wondered if that stubborn will to not compromise was what helped Rose Island get as large as it did. The other demi chefs still had expressions that made it seem like they could not accept it. Jo Minjun slowly started to speak.

“Did you send demi chefs in the past as well?”

“Yes. And.....”

Rachel continued.

“Those kids have never lost even once.”

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Thankfully, Rachel did not leave the recipe up to the demi chefs as well. It was normal. Rachel had said that the demi chefs were the ones to participate because they would be the ones to actually cook in the kitchen.

While the demi chefs cook in the kitchen, the majority of the recipe development was Rachel’s responsibility. That was why it made sense that the recipe for the competition came from Rachel’s head as well.

There was less than half a month left until the competition. Maybe that was why, but Rachel was being extremely strict compared to her normal style. If it looked like you were about to get something even slightly wrong, Rachel immediately came to you and shouted sternly.

“Move your hand. Even if you put that in the frying pan, it’ll just end up as fried trash.”

“Think that the hall over there is full of customers. You pretty much just told a customer to wait 20 more minutes!”

“If this is all you got, I won’t have anything to say when the Epicureans will say that Rose Island is now only a shell of its past.”

Maybe it was because the real game had started now. The usually gentle Rachel had completely disappeared to the point that we could barely even remember it existed. That was how rough she was right now.

What they were making was a four-course meal. Appetizer, pasta, main, and dessert. Jo Minjun was responsible for the dessert. At the same time, he was also the team captain. The reason that he became the team captain out of the four of them was simple.

‘You have the best sense when it comes to molecular gastronomy. That is why you have to be the team captain.’

It was not a nice explanation, but it made sense. Jo Minjun’s dessert was not the only dish to feature molecular gastronomy methods. Anderson’s pasta, well to be more specific, other than his gnocchi, the rest of the dishes were all influenced by molecular gastronomy.

What he had learned under Rachel’s guidance was that her control of the kitchen, as well as her attention to everything going on, was so perfect it was scary. In fact, her leadership was almost more respectable than her cooking skills.

Although the four chefs were cooking apart from each other, Rachel was like a ghost. She knew exactly when any of them made even the slightest of errors. If someone messed up the proportions of the ingredients, Rachel could even instantly state which ingredient it was and even how much of it they were off.

‘.....At her level, it is pretty much the same as the system.’

The thing that Jo Minjun was most satisfied with the system ability he had was that it was able to immediately recognize any errors. It was easier to resolve issues if you know what is wrong while you are cooking, rather than being told what was wrong once you finished.

Furthermore, Jo Minjun could use the estimated cooking score to determine the best course of action. It was an advantage that no other chef in the world could have. Well, that's what he thought.

But the moment he became Rachel's disciple, he had to get rid of that idea. Rachel was the perfect mentor. She gave you the advice you needed most when you needed it the most.

With a mentor like her, even without the system, their growth should not be much slower than Jo Minjun. But Jo Minjun was not anxious. He did not wish to stand at the top by himself. What he wanted was for no one to fall behind and for everyone that he loved to run side by side. Being at the top together rather than alone. Jo Minjun preferred something like that.

Of course,

“.....This is so tiring.”

Just because you enjoy it doesn't mean that it is not tiring. Javier stuck his tongue out like a dog as he plopped down into a chair in the hall. Ella, who had just come back from kindergarten, took a vitamin candy out of her cute children's backpack and held it up. She started to speak in a concerned voice.

“Is it really hard? It'll be better if you eat this.”

“Does that solve any problems?”

“Yes. Mommy says she's not tired at all if she eats this. She also gets completely better if Ella kisses her.”

“Will you give uncle a kiss too?”

Janet threw a rubber glove at Javier's face. It made a slapping

noise as if she had slapped him. Janet started to speak in a cold voice.

“Should I report you?”

“.....I am just joking! A joke! Can't I say something full of humor every so often? You need to watch some stand-up comedies or something like that. You are too stiff.”

“You go watch a documentary first and then let me know.”

It wasn't rare to see them argue like this. Anderson was looking at Jo Minun. Jo Minjun lifted up his chin as if to ask ‘what are you looking at?’ Anderson started to speak.

“Aren't they the same as you and Kaya?”

“They can hear you. Be quiet.”

“What you just said. Kaya kept telling me the same thing.”

Janet quietly glared at Anderson after he said that. Of course, Anderson was not the type to flinch at Janet's gaze. In the end, Jo Minjun stepped forward and started to speak.

“Enough fighting. We are a team. We need to get on the same page.”

“.....What's the point? We just have to cook our own dishes.”

“Janet, do you really think that?”

Jo Minjun gazed at Janet. There was no malice, but rather, the gaze was full of disappointment. That was why it was harder to stand. If there was even a hint of malice, she would argue back, but since there was just disappointment and care, it made her feel like she had become a bad person.

‘.....Well, it is true that I am not a good person.’

But Jo Minuun was certainly a good chef and a good person. Natural talent. That talent was paired together with luck through the broadcast to make him a genius that became a demi chef for

Rose Island at the young age of 21. Since it was that Jo Minjun, Janet had always considered him to be a competitor she had to overcome.

But Jo Minjun considered Janet a friend. When she realized how he felt, Janet could only admit that she had lost. That was the same right now. Janet let out a sigh.

“I will take back my last statement.”

“Okay, thank you.”

Jo Minjun smiled brightly. Janet let out another sigh internally. It made her think about Minjun’s girlfriend. Kaya. The image of how the woman who was famous for her attitude act like a gentle girl in front of Jo Minjun was still fresh on her mind. But she understood what Kaya was going through. Jo Minjun did not just have a nice personality. He was sincere, and a gentleman’s attitude was ingrained in everything he did. To treat such a person terribly would only end up lowering your own value.

The atmosphere turned better. Jo Minjun lightly pressed on Ella’s nose as she flopped down to his knees and started to speak.

“Anyways, isn’t molecular gastronomy fun and amazing the more you do it?”

“He’s slowly trying to accept it. I guess it makes sense. If he doesn’t even do that, being in charge of the molecular gastronomy section will only feel super tiring.”

“.....Be quiet, Anderson. I am not trying to brainwash myself. I really feel that way. It is fun. It’s so interesting to watch cream and sauces that I thought could only be in liquid form become powder. I enjoy making pasta out of other things than just flour, and the fact that water can take shape, it really..... Chef Rafael said this to me. He said I will not regret coming to the molecular gastronomy section. Lately, I am starting to understand why he said that.”

“See, acceptance.”

Anderson shrugged his shoulders as he said that. Jo Minjun quietly glared at Anderson before looking down at Ella and starting to speak.

“Ella. Out of all of the chefs here, which chef’s cooking do you like the most.”

“I like Uncle Minjun’s the best.”

“See. Molecular gastronomy is like this.”

The three chefs who had been looking at Ella with anticipation quickly lowered their heads at her quick response. Janet opened her mouth as if to say she did not like the answer.

“This is not fair. Ella would say anything you made is good.”

“We will know if we ask. Ella. Do you like everything that uncle makes?”

“Mm, uhh.....I still don’t like broccoli.”

“See. She says she doesn’t like it.”

“.....That is slightly different.”

Although Janet answered while shaking her head, Jo Minjun did not care. He started to speak in a pious voice as if he had become a religious believer.

“The power of science is amazing. It easily destroys the things people know about cooking. Just doing molecular gastronomy makes me feel like I’ve become a revolutionary.”

“I accept thatbut it makes me scared as well. If the molecular gastronomy kit continues to develop..... the concept of home cooking that we have lived with until now can be shaken. It makes me wonder whether I will be able to keep up with the trends when I get older.”

“Just look at Teacher Rachel. She may be older in age, but she’s as good as, no, she’s even better at handling molecular gastronomy than sous chef Rafael. There is nothing you won’t be able to do if

you put in the effort.”

“.....Are you comparing me to Teacher Rachel right now?”

Javier asked with a stiff expression. Jo Minjun let out a moan as he rolled his eyes.

“Is it overestimating you?”

“I was able to feel it in my bones based on the recipe and know-how that chef taught us this time. She has something that you cannot explain with experience again.”

“That something. I’m sure teacher will teach it to us as well. So do not worry.”

Jo Minjun started to speak as if he was calming Javier down. Nobody noticed it yet, but the team captain position was naturally putting a special kind of weight in the things Jo Minjun was saying. No, it probably would still have been that way even if he wasn’t the team captain.

Jo Minjun wasn’t the type to lead the people around him to do something revolutionary, but he was the type of character that brought people around him in and consoled them. Just look at the Grand Chef competition. The people who were reluctant to get to know him in the first half of the competition ended up all becoming his friends. That gentle yet sharp and pure and warm character was his own ability that could not be expressed through the system.

“The only thing we can do right now, and the only thing we need to do right now is accurately portraying Teacher Rachel’s recipe. We will prove with our own hands what kind of chef our teacher is. And as we slowly start to introduce teacher to people

He started to laugh. It was the type of warm laughter you would get from your family members.

“Then one day, shouldn’t our hands resemble teacher’s hands?”

The other three quietly nodded their heads at Jo Minjun's words. There were no visible smiles, but there was warmth surrounding them. In the middle of that warmth, Ella was staring at her tiny hands in confusion as she started to quietly mumble.

“But grandma Rachel's hands are full of wrinkles.....”

Chapter 186: The Return of the Legend (1)

Los Angeles Cooking Competition

The qualifications were only for people who worked in Los Angeles restaurants. You could say that the scale was small compared to an international competition that gets contestants from around the world, but in reality, it was not that way.

Within the Western district of good cuisine, Los Angeles was said to have the most flair. California was known for being a hot pot of culture, and Los Angeles was no exception.

To exaggerate a little bit, there were no dishes you could not find in Los Angeles. It had people from all over the world and had restaurants of all cuisines. Which of course meant that there were all types of food in Los Angeles. The only place that could compare to the variety... would probably be Hong Kong, which is known as the capital of taste.

Thanks to that, although the Los Angeles Cooking competition was limited by region, the variety of food presented did not lose out to any international competitions. If you also take into consideration the fact that it was difficult for a restaurant to survive in Los Angeles due to the competition it was obvious that the participants had high levels of culinary skills. It was no surprise then, for Javier's face to become stiff.

“.....Hoooo. I'm surprisingly very nervous.”

“Don't be nervous. In fact, I'm sure other people are getting more nervous looking at us. We are the soldiers of Rose Island.”

“Are we somehow the focus?”

“There is no need for somehow. Wouldn't it be odder if we did not draw attention?”

Jo Minjun responded in a casual manner. Rose Island's fame, Rachel's return, and the fame that Jo Minjun and Anderson had as

well. If you put all of those together, it would be really odd for them not to draw attention. Javier looked toward Jo Minjun as if he was in awe.

“You don’t seem very nervous.”

“There is no need to be. We’ve practiced enough and our recipe is perfect. The only thing left is to trust me and all of you.”

“It is that trust that is hard to do.”

Javier shrugged his shoulders as he said that. Jo Minjun smiled as he tightly squeezed Javier’s shoulders.

“Open up your shoulders. We are better chefs than we think we are. Not only do I trust myself, I trust all of you even more. That is why I am so calm.”

“Be honest with me. Are you learning speech somewhere? You are too good with words.”

“Words said with honesty are even better to hear than prose.”

“That saying is pretty cool too.”

Javier closed his eyes and started to mumble the things that Jo Minjun had just said. Anderson was listening in on the two of their conversation before he peeked toward Janet. She was currently praying with her eyes closed. Anderson quietly watched Janet before finally starting to speak once she opened her eyes.

“This is surprising. Are you nervous too?”

Janet did not respond right away. Her pupils slowly turned to the edge of her eyes as she looked toward Anderson. It was dark and cold as usual. She slowly started to speak. Compared to the amount of time Anderson had waited, her words were short.

“Why?”

“Hmm?”

“Why is it surprising?”

“I thought you would be similar to me. Full of confidence almost to the point of cockiness. Was I wrong?”

“Yes. You were wrong.”

That was all Janet said. She did not try to explain why she was nervous. That was why it was Anderson who pushed a little more.

“Why was I mistaken?”

“Why do I need to explain that to you?”

“.....because we are teammates?”

Even Janet could not help but pfft and let out a laugh. It was weird for someone with an expression that was colder than ice to say something so cheesy that it could be found in a children’s tv show. Maybe that was why. Although she normally would not have shared her thoughts, Janet calmly let it out.

“The only thing I can do is be nervous. If I wasn’t even nervous.....I didn’t have an incomparable culinary education like you did, nor do I have an absolute taste like Minjun. The things that are easy for the two of you are difficult for me. Because of that

“It was never easy for me either.”

Anderson cut Janet off and answered. Janet instantly opened her eyes widely in shock before lowering her gaze and nodding her head.

“.....You’re right. I’m sure. It wasn’t easy for you either. Sorry. That was my mistake.”

“There is no need to apologize. Don’t be so serious.”

Anderson answered with an embarrassed expression. The atmosphere was slightly odd. Anderson let out a fake cough before turning to look at Jo Minjun before making a grim expression.

“.....Why are you looking at me like that?”

“No. It’s nothing.”

Jo Minjun started to snicker. It was the type that made Anderson have a bad feeling about it. Anderson looked away as he started to speak.

“You said Kaya was coming today, right?”

“I think so.”

“Will she cheer you on? Or will she cheer on her own restaurant?”

Instead of responding, Jo Minjun looked up toward the audience on the second floor. He could not tell whether Kaya was there. There were too many people in the audience. Someone once said that if you really love someone, they are the only one that you can see, but even that can only happen if you can see the person.

The reason that Kaya’s restaurant was taking part in the competition but Kaya was in the audience was simple. She was a head chef. Kaya’s role in a restaurant was focusing on creating recipes and being the face of the restaurant to the customers, not cooking. As it was a restaurant promoted by the Grand Chef competition, one of the biggest anticipations people had when coming there was to see the face of Kaya Lotus, the winner of the Grand Chef competition.

Jo Minjun looked around the auditorium where the contestants were gathered. There were not many who looked like they were head chefs. According to Isaac, that started to happen once Rose Island started to win the trophy with demi chefs.

Since the demi chefs are the ones to actually cook the food, the demi chefs need to be the ones to compete as well. Rose Island’s philosophy was the beginning. However, since they always won the trophy with their demi chefs, it ruined the reputation of the restaurants that also sent their sous chefs and head chef.

Of course, that did not mean that there were no head chef level

individuals there. It would not be weird for a head chef to participate if they were working on the line. It was also normal if a restaurant did not have many staff members.

‘To have enough influence to change the scope of the competition.....’

Jo Minjun closed his eyes. He could clearly feel his heart beating loudly inside. Whether the legend remained in the last or returned was up to their hands. Once he opened his eyes again, his eyes were full of fighting spirit. It was at that moment. He made contact with that person.

‘.....What is going on?’

Jo Minjun hesitated for a moment as he looked at the other person. It was an Asian man who seemed to be around his age. He was a fat man with a round face; his thick eyebrows and double eyelids made him look really strong. And then, that man started to walk toward Jo Minjun.

“Anyeonghaseyo! Jo Minjun chef-nim.”

Jo Minjun could not help but be surprised. First, the voice did not match the appearance, and second, he had spoken to Minjun not in English, but in Korean. Jo Minjun grabbed the man’s outreached hand with a slightly nervous expression.

“Ah, yes. Anyeonghaseyo.”

“I’m sorry to approach you like this out of the blue. I really wanted to meet you at least once.”

Jo Minjun finally realized that the man’s eyes seemed to be sparkling as if they were stars. Even the hand that was holding Jo Minjun’s hand was shaking from nervousness. The man bit down on his dry lips and started to speak.

“I haven’t introduced myself yet. My name is Lee Tae Hoon. I run a small Korean restaurant in Hanta.”

“Jo Minjun. But [Hanta](#)..... ah, are you talking about Koreatown?”

“Yes. I enjoyed the broadcast. And I’m very thankful. Thanks to you displaying Korean cuisine a couple times on Grand Chef, I’ve had more profits since then. Other people in Hanta feel the same way. Everyone is thankful to Jo Minjun chef-nim.”

“Ah.....is that so? I’m glad I was able to help.”

Jo Minjun answered with an unexpected expression. He had never expected that his broadcast would be helpful to Korean restaurants in the US. Especially since he did not get good results any time he attempted a Korean dish. Kimbap was similar to norimaki, but even that didn’t get that good of a response.

“Please come visit Hanta at some point. I’m sure you’ll be welcomed better than most celebrities. And I respect you. Your pioneering spirit.....was very shocking to me as well.”

“Thank you very much.”

Lee Tae Hoon smiled brightly before returning to his spot. The other demi chefs looked toward Jo Minjun in disbelief.

“I keep forgetting that you are Korean.”

“What did you talk about?”

“Nothing much. He said I was pretty popular in Koreatown.”

“Makes sense. You’re one of them.”

Anderson nodded his head as if he understood. Jo Minjun started to talk to Anderson.

“You are from Los Angeles. Wouldn’t you be pretty popular as well?”

“I don’t know.....”

Anderson peeked to the side. Amelia and Fabio’s restaurant, Glouto’s demi chefs were peeking toward Anderson before turning

their gazes away once they made eye contact. Anderson shrugged his shoulders.

“It seems like my house is treating me as a traitor.”

“You’re still getting dumped by everyone.”

Jo Minjun smirked as he responded. It was at that moment people started to whisper to each other. Jo Minjun looked to the front. There was a man and a woman walking up to the front of the auditorium. One of them was Matthew Cummings, someone famous in the entertainment world as an epicurean. As for the woman.....

“I understand why Chloe Jung is called the sexiest chef.....”

Javier answered with a blank expression. Jo Minjun had thought she was cute in the past and had never had considered her to be sexy but at least for today, he agreed with that statement. Maybe it was because she was at a formal event even if it wasn’t a broadcast. She was so beautiful that you couldn’t even remember her usual look. Her long flowing hair, her light yet vibrant makeup. It was to the point that people would believe that she was not a chef and actually a celebrity entertainer.

‘.....I guess she is an entertainer in some aspects.’

In fact, Chloe might even be making more money than Kaya. If he considered how much he was paid for appearing on the Hunger Trip..... it was definitely possible. Chloe had enough recognition now to be the MC of such a large competition like this.

The reporters here from the different news stations started to take pictures. In the midst of all of that, Matthew started to raise his voice.

“Welcome. The chefs who are responsible for the mouths of everyone in Los Angeles. This year is our 53rd annual cooking competition! My name is Matthew Cummings and I will be the MC for today’s event.”

“My name is Chloe Jung, chef, entertaining, and part-time mascot.”

Everyone started to laugh. Chloe smiled brightly as she looked around at everyone before stopping her gaze somewhere. She could see Jo Minjun. Seeing the gentle smile on his face, it made her feel even more excited. Chloe started to speak in an even happier voice.

“There are contestants here who have participated many times, as well as contestants who are competing for the first time ever. I’m sure there are people who have held the trophy before, and I think there is even a team that is heralded as a legend.”

It was clear that the last part was referring to Rose Island. Jo Minjun stared directly at Chloe. Chloe briefly made eye contact with Jo Minjun before starting to smile and continuing to speak.

“I’m sure the conclusion of today’s event will be one of these two results. There will either be a new star on the rise, or the legend will live up to its name. And maybe we might even have both.”

“Chloe. Is there a team you are rooting for?”

“Matthew. The MC can’t say anything to favor certain contestants.”

“Doesn’t it feel great when you go against what you are told to do?”

“I’m not sure. I don’t think it would be refreshing enough to pay a penalty fine.”

Chloe answered with a smile. Matthew started to snicker as he looked at the contestants.

“Before we start the competition, we will have some time for each restaurant to introduce themselves. The first oneI presume is the team that everybody is focused on today. I really wanted to be able to call their name as the MC of this event at least once.”

Matthew took a deep breath.

“Rose Island!”

In that instant, the auditorium was full of cheering and clapping. The audience on the 2nd floor, the reporters who were all gathered, and even the other chefs who were competing looked at them and started to clap. They could not help but do so.

The Los Angeles Cooking Competition held different meaning based on whether or not Rose Island took part. Honestly speaking, for the last 10 years while Rose Island was not active, there were many restaurants who chose to not even participate in the competition.

Jo Minjun could feel his face start to heat up. He knew that their claps were not directed at him, but were directed at the name of Rose Islandbut it still made his heart shake. Matthew started to speak.

“Rose Island. The undefeated champion of Los Angeles until Rachel Rose retired as a chef 10 years ago. I’m sure there are many people who are here today to take down that name.”

“Yes. I am not from Los Angeles, however, I have heard a lot about the main branch of Rose Island. It is a name you cannot miss if you have even the slightest of interest in the culinary world. That is why I am even more excited than usual today.”

“One of the items on my bucket list, since I debuted, was to stand here and judge. Unfortunately, the main branch closed as soon as I debuted but I guess I am finally able to fulfill my dream 10 years later like this.”

It did not sound he was reading off a script. Matthew’s eyes were full of anticipation and joy. Chloe and Matthew approached Rose Island’s team and started to speak.

“I would think that all of you are very nervous right now. The legend of Rose Island that has been preserved until now is in all of

your hands. How do you feel?”

The four of them looked toward one another at Matthew’s question. There was only one person who could step up as the representative in a situation like this. Three of their gazes were directed toward one person, and in the end, Jo Minjun started to speak.

“We prepared quite a bit for this. Chef Rachel’s recipe was perfect and we have practiced enough as well. That is why we have no confidence.”

At that moment, Chloe and Matthew, no, not just them but everybody who heard his voice had confused expressions on their faces. Matthew asked in an anxious voice.

“The recipe is perfect and you practiced enough, so why do you have no confidence?”

Jo Minjun started to smirk.

“No confidence that we will lose.”

Koreatown in Korean is Han In Tah Oon. Hanta for short.

Chapter 187: The Return of the Legend (2)

“Haha..... that is quite the confidence.”

Even Matthew, who had many years of experience, could not help but be nervous for a second at that response. It was not just him. Some of the chefs and audience members were laughing while others were in awe. Matthew asked the question they all wanted to ask.

“I am curious about the source of that confidence. Is it the Rose Island’s name?”

“Is there a tree with only one strand of root anywhere in the world? The source of confidence is the same. Furthermore, the name of Rose Island ... gives us more of a sense of duty rather than confidence.”

“Then.”

Chloe suddenly interjected. She asked with a beautiful smile.

“What is the thickest root for Minjoon?”

“For me.....”

Jo Minjun stopped speaking for a moment. His eyes didn’t know where to go and looked up into the sky. The contemplation did not take very long.

“I would have to say, my teammates.”

“You do know that is a very typical answer right?”

“It has to be a typical answer. Universal things like this tend not to be wrong.”

“Your old-fashioned personality is still the same.”

Jo Minjun quietly responded with a smile at Chloe’s response. The Q&A portion continued on to the other teams. The funny thing was that there were more teams that talked about Rose

Island than those who did not. One of the most memorable ones was what Glouto's demi chef team leader had to say.

“Our head chef-nims gave us one special order.”

“What special order?”

“We don't care if you don't win. Just make sure you don't lose to a child like Anderson.”

Anderson grabbed his forehead like he had a headache after hearing that. He looked around at the audience with a resentful gaze. It was not hard to locate where Amelia and Fabio were sitting since they were putting their fingers in their mouths and whistling their approval. Janet started to speak as if she was making fun of him.

“You have really good parents, don't you?”

“.....Don't rub it in. It's annoying.”

The rest of the teams pretty much said the same thing. The desire to surpass the legend of Rose Island. There were even quite a lot of people growling and saying they will take Jo Minjun's confidence down a notch. However, Jo Minjun was not nervous.

‘.....Firstly, there is no one with a cooking level of 9.’

It was pretty obvious if he thought about it. A cooking level of 9 was not something that was so easy to find. However, there were quite a few people with level 8. It almost filled all ten of his fingers. Lee Tae Hoon, the Korean man who greeted Jo Minjun earlier, was one of those people.

Of course, there was no team as strong as Rose Island when looking at the team's averages core. They had two level 8 and two level 7. He was not worried. However, he still had to focus. Letting your guard down always causes unexpected results. Jo Minjun looked toward the other three members and started to speak.

“There is no reason for us to lose. Rachel teacher's recipe is

perfect, and we have practiced enough. What we need to look for is not just a victory but to let them know that Rose Island is back for good. We need to show them the most overwhelming presence possible. Even if we have to draw out our souls, we need to be the best version of us that we have ever been.”

“.....You seem really confident.”

“I told you already. I trust you.”

Jo Minjun answered in a ‘is there even a reason to ask’ type of expression. Janet felt a part of her heart started to quiver while looking at Jo Minjun respond like that. Trust. It was a word that was missing from her mind for many years. She had never expected anyone to accept her as a teammate like this.

Jo Minjun did not care that Janet was a female chef. But it was not just Jo Minjun. Anderson and Javier as well did not try to discriminate against her because she was a woman. They did not try to help her because of it either. They just treated her as just another chef.

‘.....I need to show it to them as well.’

She needed to show that she was a strong chef just like they trusted her to be.

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“The judging will be done by 11 epicureans. We cannot reveal the names of the judges until the dishes are completed. Please make a dish that can win over any judge, no matter who it is!”

“You have exactly 30 minutes to cook. Is there anybody who is not finished setting up yet?”

There was no response. Chloe nodded her head and shouted out loud. Her heart was beating fast. Although the location was different, she was able to say the things the judges used to say to her when she was competing on Grand Chef.

“Start cooking!”

The moment Chloe shouted out loud with an excited expression, the chef brigades all started to move.

The team with the unique countertop was probably Rose Island. They had many different machines for molecular gastronomy.

The appetizer Janet was making a jelly solidified with gelatin after liquefying a salad. After that, she will sprinkle sugar over it and caramelize it, giving the jelly a crunchy feel like it was a thin candy.

Anderson's dish did not use any molecular gastronomy techniques. He was personally making a shrimp ball and carrot gnocchi dough and cooking it, before putting a shrimp bisque made of shrimp shells on the dish like a sauce and finishing it off with a pea garnish.

In Javier's case, it was a mix of traditional cooking and molecular gastronomy. Javier put the charcoal they brought to roast an eel and will end up putting boiled lentils on a dish with the eel on top of it. He will then have to jellify a soy sauce to put on top of that and finish it off with a foam ginger cream. It was a reinvented version of a Japanese eel roast.

As for Jo Minjun.....

‘I never expected a day like this when I would be holding a syringe at a cooking competition.’

His dish was a variation of the jelly spaghetti he made before at the tasting. Rachel's recipe was simple. Boil water and agar together and add white chocolate and coconut liqueur before letting it simmer down slightly. Then do the same thing he did before to make the jelly spaghetti: put the liquid in the syringe to push into a tube and let it cool in ice water.

The chocolate spaghetti made that way was white in color that it made it look like a regular spaghetti noodle. On top of that will be a

carbonated strawberry sauce with strawberry pieces to represent the tomato sauce, and the couple raisins on top will represent the meatballs.

‘Fake spaghetti.’

At first glance, it looks like a spaghetti, however, the taste is completely different. Dishes like this were called fake dishes.

It was a type of cooking that even epicureans were always excited to try.

Jo Minjun first prepped the strawberries. There were two methods to carbonate fruit. You could either use a siphon or ISI foam machine to add the carbonation, or you could put the fruit on top of dry ice. Jo Minjun chose the latter method.

The strawberry for the sauce and the strawberry for the decor were cut into different sizes. After putting all of those strawberries on top of the dry ice, he needed to quickly prepare the filling for the chocolate spaghetti.

The audience was mainly focusing on Rose Island. It was not just because of the Rose Island’s name. There were some teams that were also doing molecular gastronomy, but no teams that were focusing on molecular gastronomy like Rose Island. For a restaurant like Rose Island that represented the glory of the past to be doing modern cooking like this was interesting.

“Little Anderson’s dough making has improved quite a bit.”

“Of course, he needs to do that much. Did you forget whose son he is?”

Amelia and Fabio were not even looking at Glouto’s demi chefs and were just focused on Rose Island. To be specific, they were only focused on Anderson, but they ended up looking at the others every so often in the process.

The one to get their gaze the most after Anderson was Jo Minjun. It was because his cooking was the most unique, as well as the fact

that there was a lot for him to do. Not only did Jo Minjun have to cook his dish, he had to check the status of the other team members as well. Fabio started to speak as if he was jealous.

“Minjun really has strong kitchen commanding skills. Maybe it is because he has a great palette. He’s able to figure out the issue after tasting things just once.”

“Our Anderson needs to become like that too.”

“He just hasn’t had the opportunity yet. If he gets the opportunity, he will do well.”

“But Minjun will still be better.”

A husky voice suddenly interjected from the side. Amelia and Fabio started to frown as they looked to the side before becoming confused. It was a woman with long, black, curly hair. She also had sunglasses and a mask over her mouth. There was no way to figure out who she was.

The woman lightly lowered her sunglasses. However, Amelia and Fabio still could not tell who they were. In the end, she needed to lift her mask as well before they finally realized who it was and let out a gasp.

“Kaya. It was you.”

“It’s been a while. We’ve seen all of your endeavors with joy until now.”

“Endeavors? I really haven’t done much.”

“Well. You know. Is the mask you’re wearing the one you wore that time?”

Kaya started to blush as she finally understood what they were talking about. As Amelia started to laugh, Fabio subtly elbowed Amelia’s side. Fabio started to smile as he looked at Kaya.

“So who are you here to cheer on today? Grand Chef restaurant? Or Rose Island?”

“Both.”

“Ay, you can’t answer like that. There should be someone you are pushing for more than the other.”

“.....I guess Grand Chef restaurant?”

It was a surprising answer. Amelia asked with a confused expression.

“This is surprising. You are not taking Minjun’s side.”

“I don’t know.”

Kaya shrugged her shoulders. Honestly speaking, the reason she wanted Grand Chef to win was because of Jo Minjun as well. She wanted to see Jo Minjun with a disappointed expression. She wanted to be able to console him and hug him tightly. She also wanted that sense of we beat you and wanted to remain the main character that he once said he admired as a chef.

“What about the two of you. Do you want Glouto to win? Or do you want Rose Island to win with Anderson as the star?”

“Of course Glouto. You enjoy a child’s growth only until they get to about your chest. Once they start getting taller than you, then they start to become a bit disgusting.”

“.....I’m taller than my mom too.”

“Too bad. You ended up a disgusting daughter.”

“It’s okay. Minjun tells me I’m pretty.”

Amelia looked at Fabio as Kaya said that. Fabio just looked at her wondering why she was looking at him. Amelia let out a sigh.

“Fine. I lose there.”

“Just when did the two of you start competing?”

“.....Honey. Can you do me a favor and just shut up?”

Fabio closed his mouth and pretended to close a zipper over it. Amelia looked at Kaya and responded with a challenging tone.

“Just wait. My son will crush your boyfriend.”

“Hmph. Minjun is not that weak.”

“For not being weak, I think my son beating him in the recent Epicurean show.”

She was talking about the competition they had on Hunger Trip. Kaya could not respond to that and just twisted her lips behind the mask. She then started to mumble in an angry voice.

“Just wait. Today, Minjun will definitely beat Anderson.”

“You sure? I think we’ll need to wait about 10 years for that to happen.”

Fabio started to mumble in disbelief.

“Umm...they are on the same team...”

Chapter 188: The Return of the Legend (3)

Kaya and Amelia did not lower their competitive spirit even at Fabio's comment. Of course, their bickering wasn't going to impact Anderson and Jo Minjun's teamworkFabio just clicked his tongue before mumbling internally to himself.

‘Women. Why do they make their lives so complicated?’

There were only 5 minutes left of the original 30 minutes. Rose Island was already plating their dishes. You could see the difference between relaxed teams and pressured teams based on their plating. Kay started to speak. Her face was covered in a mask, but you could clearly tell that she had a smile on her face.

“Look at how relaxed our Minjun is. Other teams are plating one or two plates but Minjun seems to be plating based on the number of judges. Chefs have to be cool like that.”

“Anderson is the same way. To make a gnocchi dough and bisque in that short amount of time.....our son is really amazing.”

“Minjun oversaw that as well.”

“Enough enough. Both of you, that's enough. Anyway, Kaya, are your restaurant team members cooking based on your recipe?”

Fabio must have decided it would not end if he interjected and changed the topic. Kaya hesitated for a moment and twisted her lips. The response did not come out very quickly.

“.....About half of half.”

“What is up with that odd answer?”

Kaya did not respond. It was not that she debating what to say. She just did not want to answer. She did provide the original recipe, however, it was adjusted and improved by the real head chef to the point that the dishes they were making down there were almost not related to her original recipes. To respond, she

would have to tell them all of that or lie. Either way, it was better to not say anything at all.

Thankfully, Amelia did not ask any further. Kaya crossed her legs as well as her arms. Her eyes that were hidden behind her sunglasses chased after Chloe.

“.....Chloe, you’re so cool.’

To not back down in front of so many people. Chloe’s expression was confident, energetic and always smiling. Kaya was envious of that face. She wanted to make that type of expression and let out that kind of voice. Being the Grand Chef looked luxurious on the outside, but all of it was just an empty shell.

‘What would Kaya Lotus be.....if I was not the winner of Grand Chef?’

She couldn’t even come up with a recipe to send to the competition. That weighed heavily on Kaya’s heart. She wanted to be out there in the kitchen as a demi chef like Jo Minjun or Anderson... but she could not do that. First of all, she was a head chef. Although it was just head chef in name..... that was the only position she could have right now.

One year. I just need to persevere for one year. She tried to think that way but it was too frustrating to spend one year as more of a celebrity, no, actually, more like a mascot than a chef. It may sound like she was not thankful for what she had, but she wanted to hold a knife in her hand. She wanted to hold a pan and feel the heat of the fire. The softness of water that runs across your skin, the smell of the vegetables as you fry it in a pan, she wanted to feel all of it.

Maybe it was because of that desire, but Kaya’s eyes as she looked at Jo Minjun, no, as she looked at everyone cooking in that auditorium, were full of longing.

‘I.....want to cook.’

Jo Minjun suddenly stopped while cleaning the plate. He slowly raised his head and looked toward the audience. Anderson took a peek at him before deciding to ask.

“Is something over there?”

“.....Nothing. I was just wondering if Kaya would be here by now.”

“Seeing as how quiet it is, she must not be here. Either that, or she’s in a disguise.”

Jo Minjun silently looked over the plates. It was not only Jo Minjun that prepared 13 dishes. The rest of Rose Island did that as well. They seemed to want to feed the judges as well as the announcers. The chefs from the other teams just shook their heads in disbelief after seeing what Rose Island had prepared.

‘Crazy. Making gnocchi dough and doing molecular gastronomy while preparing 13 of each dish.....’

‘Rose Island really came to put everything on the line.’

It was not something they could have achieved by practicing crazily for a couple days. It really depended on how strong the foundation you had built from the beginning was. All of the chefs who were present could feel it. The demi chefs of Rose Island were not at the typical demi chef level.

At the center of that was Jo Minjun. Matthew lauded them while quietly muttering to Chloe.

“Is it because of the experience on Grand Chef? Minjun’s lead was not that awkward. He seemed very experienced.”

“We had to handle difficult missions in a pressured environment. Minjun is gentle. If he has his teammates’ trust, he will even make the impossible possible to meet their expectations. He was a good leader. He was the best leader of the leaders I worked with on the show.”

“He really must have been for you to praise him so much.”

Matthew looked at Chloe as if he was trying to look into her mind. Chloe did not meet Matthew’s eyes. However, even without making eye contact, it was easy to tell how she felt. For the last thirty minutes, Chloe’s gaze was focused on Rose Island whenever she had a chance. To be specific, it should really be said that her gaze was directed at Jo Minjun whenever there was a chance.

‘This woman is walking a difficult path as well.’

Of course, that was none of his business. Matthew continued on in a calm voice.

“I will announce it when the time is up.”

“Please do. I am satisfied with announcing the beginning portion.”

Matthew silently looked at the clock. In the past, he looked at that clock from the audience. But now, he was looking at it as the announcer. There was a different feeling between the two. The border between the past and the present. Similarly, the Rose Island of the past with new demi chefs. After thinking about all of that, his voice suddenly rang out.

“Time is up. Hands up in the air!”

Rose Islands demi chefs had already finished before time was up. Jo Minjun just silently looked through the other chefs’ dishes. They were all good dishes. If you looked at just the cooking score, the majority were 7 points. There were some 9 points as well. In comparison, the Rose Island team’s dishes.....

‘All 9 points.’

Which meant they did not make any mistakes while they were cooking. It was almost impossible for them to make a mistake. Throughout the process, if any of the other three looked like they were about to make a mistake, the estimated dish score immediately responded in Jo Minjun’s head. He headed over to the

person each time to point something out and the rest of them was able to figure out a response to it.

“Good job everyone.”

“Don’t say good job before we even won.”

Anderson responded in a grumbling voice. Jo Minjun started to grin as he looked forward. Chloe

was shouting out into the microphone in a slightly nervous voice.

“Everyone, good job putting the soul of your store into these dishes. We will now announce the judges!”

As soon as she finished speaking, the curtain behind the MCs opened up. Jo Minjun flinched for a second and started to shiver. There were two familiar faces.

“Mr. Jeremy and even Emily..... I didn’t expect to see them again here.”

“They are both famous epicureans.”

Anderson answered in a casual voice like he wasn’t surprised at all.

The tasting started. The thing that surprised Jo Minjun the most was Emily’s judging. Jeremy was always rough and known for his vicious comments. It wasn’t odd for Jeremy to have a lot of negative comments. However, Emily was different.

“So you are saying this is the dish that represents your restaurant? Disappointing. It would have been better to say this was a failed dish. I guess there will be no reason for me to visit your restaurant in the future.”

“The head chef personally came out. How many staff members do you have in your store? Ah. Then you probably spend more time plating on the island than actually cooking. So why did you decide to pick up the pan today? This dish made it very clear that you lost your touch. The meat was overcooked, and the puree is

bland. Why didn't you leave it to your demi chefs?"

"You mentioned that you lost a Michelin star lately. You also said you couldn't accept that result. However, in my opinion, it was the right decision to remove that star. This dish in front of me is a basic dish you can taste anywhere. The taste is good. But the creativity is dead. Did you lose your passion for cooking or did you lose your creativity? Whichever it may be, it will be difficult to pick your confidence back up with the dish you made today."

Of course, she was not so vicious to every team. The focus of her tirade was the teams that she determined lacked the foundation. The problem was that some of the dishes she critiqued were 8 points and 9 point dishes. But even if they were 9 point dishes, if you looked at the creativity component, it wouldn't be hard to critique it.

The problem was that each of the judges had a different standard of judging. Any dish that did not meet their standards were criticized terribly. Even Janet was nervously biting her lips. That pressure was overwhelming.

But Jo Minjun kept his head up. Jo Minjun greeted the judges with a confident gaze when he went to put the plates in front of them. One of them opened their mouth to speak.

"It's been quite a while since we last saw Rose Island at this competition."

The response was, of course, JO Minjun's duty. He confidently answered.

"Yes. We heard that was the case."

"We have both nervousness and concern while we stand in front of these dishes. I am scared to even pick up my fork. Rose Island. Main Branch. Our memories of that place whether you will maintain it or make us think that the stories were exaggerated, how will it end up....."

“The memories will disappear.”

Jo Minjun answered in a quiet voice. The judge’s eyebrow went up at Minjun’s words. Jo Minjun slowly continued to speak.

“The main branch is no longer the past restaurant that will remind you of ten years ago. Chef Rachel is alive and the main branch is still there. No, in fact, it has improved.”

“Is that improvement perhaps talking about this molecular gastronomy? It’s not bad to see a focus on molecular gastronomy. The message that Rose Island is not stuck in traditional cooking is good as well. However, just because you attempt something new does not mean that you have gained something new. Based on what I have heard all of you have only been working on molecular gastronomy for one month, is that true?”

“Yes. That is true for us demi chefs. However, Chef Rachel’s past ten years is on top of these dishes. And the rest of us are all here because of our head chef’s hard work. The food that we have made is Chef Rachel’s dishes. Our molecular gastronomy experience will not be a problem.”

Jo Minjun said that as he pointed to the appetizer. He calmly continued to speak.

“The appetizer is jellified salad candified with brown sugar. Please have a taste.”

The epicureans picked up their forks at Minjun’s suggestion. Jo Minjun was not nervous. They did not make any mistakes and the recipe was perfect. For a dish made within 30 minutes, it could not get much better. They slowly put the salad in their mouth before having a disappointed expression. The candified sugar was nothing special and the jelly was the same. However, the situation changed instantly.

“This.....”

Jeremy started to speak in a surprised voice. Jo Minjun did not

say anything. By now they should be overwhelmed by the fragrance of the salad bursting out inside of their mouth. They had controlled the density of the gelatin, the liquid salad that was swimming in the jelly should have been released.

All of the judges became speechless and just exchanged looks with each other. After eating the single bite of jelly, it was time for Anderson's gnocchi. This gnocchi that was made from carrot dough was the result of Rachel personally teaching Anderson for a whole day. The end product was of course perfect. The soft taste of the carrot was partnered with the savory and sweet taste of the shrimp bisque hit your tongue like a beautiful plump noblewoman of the past. Even the texture of the shrimp ball next to the gnocchi was perfectly chewy and soft that you could not ask for anything more.

Even now, none of them were speaking. Some of them were lost in bliss while some of them reached for the next dish as if they could not wait any longer. It was Javier's eel roast. On top of the eel that absorbed the smokiness of the charcoal was the soy sauce jelly and ginger cream foam sauce. The eel that lost about half of its fishy smell because of the charcoal was washed with the ginger cream foam sauce before it was wrapped in the soy sauce jelly. Although they were eating food, it felt more like they were admiring a piece of art that was on the top of their tongue. This eel roast made them feel like that.

The final dish was Jo Minjun's dessert. Some of them looked confused at the dish that did not look like a dessert, however, most of them didn't even have the luxury to do that. They were so absorbed by the meal that they slowly rolled up the spaghetti and put it into their mouth as if they were disappointed that they were already at the end of the course.

The melted chocolate in the spaghetti brought out more of the taste of the cocoa instead of focusing on the sweetness. Once that harmonized with the sweetness of the carbonated strawberry, it

created a taste that nobody could anticipate at all. It was like an explosion. It was the most beautiful yet gentle and loving kiss.

In the end, some of the epicureans started to cry. It was not just torn. It was a painful expression full of sorrow and longing. The four dishes created a perfect harmony that worked flawlessly.

“Rose.....Island.”

Someone started to mumble as if they were chanting a spell. The other epicureans nodded their heads as if they agreed and started to mumble the same thing as well. Rose Island. Rose Island.

Jo Minjun had a conspicuous plan as he stood up straight and looked in front of him. All of the dishes were cleared cleanly. The dishes were completely clear without even a single drop of sauce remaining. The people who cleaned these dishes were whispering to each other.

This exact moment.

The legend had returned.

Chapter 189: The Return of the Legend (4)

Once they finished tasting the Rose Island team's dishes, everyone there was certain. The scales of victory had already tilted. There was no other way. Even the audience could tell that the judges were full of admiration, no, completely overwhelmed by the dishes.

The four dishes Rose Island presented were perfect. Each and every one of the details were alive and the plating was clean. It was hard to believe that they made all of this in 30 minutes. Most surprising was the synergy between the four dishes. A course meal is not eaten all at once. Because of that, you could say each of the dishes are in its own individual territory.....but their course was helping fix that type of thought.

The first salad jelly was not there just to round out the assortment. The taste of the greens inside helped cleanse the palate of the food you ate before that. But that wasn't it. The taste of the greens remained until you bit down onto the carrot gnocchi and shrimp balls, and only started to disappear once you started to eat the main eel roast.

And then the moment the strong taste of the eel seemed to remain in your mouth, Jo Minjun's white chocolate pasta with strawberry sauce filled your mouth with both a sour and sweet taste at the same time..... that it cleared the inside of your mouth completely without needing to stop to drink some water. It was too good of a composition. It was a course that would make anybody who knew a thing about food start to drool. Chloe closed her eyes and let the taste take her mind away.

‘This.....Minjun made this.’

The dessert itself was amazing, but the fact that Jo Minjun did not make even a single mistake in putting this together was even more surprising. To perfectly make such a complicated molecular

gastronomy dish without making a single mistake.....

The composition of the dish, as well as the sophistication and whimsical nature of the recipe was amazing as well. She felt like she could finally understand just what kind of person Rachel Rose happened to be. And Jo Minjun was working under such a person. While Chloe stands in front of the camera, Jo Minjun was standing next to the greatest chef of this generation.

“.....Amazing, Minjun. No, the entire Rose Island team. You really made some amazing dishes. I am envious and think you are very cool.”

“Thank you very much.”

Jo Minjun shortly answered. Chloe was not disappointed. It might seem cocky to respond to a compliment with anything more. Matthew, who was lost in his thoughts, slowly started to speak.

“I am a failure as an MC. Miss Chloe, you as well. How could we not say a single thing while eating a four course meal? Look at the frustrated faces of our audience.”

“Ah. I really feel sorry for all of them. It’s so sad they do not get to eat this.”

“Hmm hmm, Miss Chloe, maybe you should stop with the compliments. As an MC, you can’t show favoritism for one team?”

“Right. I must be fair. But their dishes make even an MC unable to be fair. Ah.....I am full of admiration. I didn’t know the order of the dishes could bring forth such amazing tastes. I really wish my words could become the flavor to reach all of your tongues. Judges, don’t you agree?”

Chloe looked around to the judges. But the majority of them were not in a state to respond. Someone was sniffing while still lost in thought, while another one was just blankly staring at the empty plate. The only one who managed to say anything was Emily. She started to speak with a complicated expression on her face.

“Yes, I agree. This is the first time in my life I’ve had so much trouble describing a taste. For molecular gastronomy to land in the hands of Chef Rachel Rose..... this feels completely different than anything I have eaten in my life.”

“Which aspect is different?”

“I guess a feeling you get from not. No, that is not enough to describe it. I feel like I am being told a story as I eat it. If I had to say so myself, the majority of molecular gastronomy restaurants have an issue because the chefs are still not completely familiar with the composition of molecular gastronomy dishes. It can’t be helped. Molecular gastronomy has only been around for about 10 years. Even the so called molecular gastronomy experts would have no more than 10 years of experience.”

“That means.....Chef Rachel Rose has completely mastered molecular gastronomy?”

“It is difficult for me to answer that. However, what I am certain about.....”

Emily pointed to the empty plates. Her voice was full of admiration and awe, as well as excitement. It was so hard to believe that she had been giving cold scoldings to the chefs prior to this.

“Out of all of the chefs i have met, Rachel Rose has the greatest understanding of molecular gastronomy. She also utilizes it the best. I’m sure everyone here today has felt that. That is why they can’t sit still right now.”

Chloe looked around at the other chefs, the epicureans, at Emily’s words. Emily was right. All of them didn’t know what to do with themselves. Chloe was finally certain. Rose Island did not just make a perfect and tasty dish. They had shown something different than all of the other dishes here today. While other people were admiring the view on top of the mountain, the Rose Island dishes were helping people see everything in the sky.

‘They made it so.....you could experience the food with your whole body.’

There is always just one piece for a single-bite dish. Rachel overcame that issue with multiple courses. Rather than letting you feel many dishes in one bite, she made it so you can feel one taste with multiple dishes. The taste that remained in people’s mouth right now was exactly that. The amazing thing was that she managed to do this with not her strength, traditional cooking, but molecular gastronomy. This molecular gastronomy that she should not have much experience with.

The fact that Rose Island was not the last team was terrible for both the judges as well as the remaining teams. The judges could not get any type of positive feelings for their dishes. It was not that it was not tasty. In fact, there were many dishes you couldn’t help but proclaim that they were great. However, after trying Rose Island’s course, the other course meals did not even feel like course meals. The difference you could clearly tell from looking at an adult and a child was completely visible in the dishes.

‘10 years ago, Rose Island was always the last to go in this competition.’

Since things always ended up like this in the past, the anticipation from the competition disappeared when Rose Island went first. After not having Rose Island here for 10 years, they must have completely forgotten about that a well.

‘Everyone will need to remember it once more from now on.’

The island that everyone believed to have sunk had resurfaced. Now, everyone will have to look toward that island once more. They will dream about coming onto that island. JEremy started to snicker and mumble to himself, as if just thinking about it was funny.

“The cooks will start to get busy.”

“The winner is..... Rose Island!”

Nobody was surprised when Matthew announced the results. Everybody had anticipated this result. Of course there were people who hoped for an upset, but seeing the rebirth of a legend was more refreshing. Almost everybody had a smile on their faces.

Hundred, no thousands of claps filled the auditorium. The chefs were the same way. They all turned toward ROse Island’s team and sincerely clapped for them.

Jo Minjun did not start to walk right away. He closed his eyes and engraved the glory of the moment in his mind. This fervor of clapping that resonated not just in your ear, but also through your body. The thousands of eyes and cheering that filled the auditorium.

Jo Minjun slowly started to open his eyes. He then turned toward the other team members.

“Let’s go.”

“.....All of us?”

Janet asked in a surprised tone. Jo Minjun calmly answered back.

“We all cooked together. WE should all get the trophy together as well.”

Jo Minjun started to walk. Of course there was nothing like a red carpet. However, walking in the midst of chefs clapping for him felt more glamorous and amazing than walking the red carpet. Chloe and Matthew looked toward them from the stage. Matthew slowly started to speak.

“Everyone longed for the legend and were curious about it. Thank you, chefs of Rose Island. You have proved that the legend still exists. Now, the legend is no longer just a memory but among all of us!”

“Congratulations. Winners of the 53rd LA Cooking Competition. If possible, we want to give each of you a trophy.....but unfortunately there is only one. Is there someone who will receive it as the representative?”

The demi chefs silently looked toward Jo Minjun at Chloe’s question. Anderson pushed Jo Minjun forward. Jo Minjun seemed to be nervous for a moment before gently smiling and receiving the trophy from Chloe. Cameras started to flash all around them. The words ‘Grand Prize’ that was engraved on the crystal trophy was clearly visible. Chloe had a comfortable smile that you would normally show your friends as she asked. Her tone was pretty formal.

“How do you feel?”

“.....This is the first trophy I’ve ever received in my life. My first victory. Although it is a trophy that I did not earn alone and earned together with the rest of the team, I think that actually makes this more worthwhile.”

“Is there anything you want to say?”

Jo Minjun gulped at those words. He then slowly turned to look at the other demi chiefs, as well as the audience and the judges.

He then slowly started to speak.

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“Long time no see, Emily, and JEremy.”

“I was planning on being really tough on you if it wasn’t good, but you brought a dish that made me unable to do that. Amazing.”

“I am not amazing. I just did as Teacher Rachel taught me.”

“The majority of demi chefs tend to not be able to do as they are taught. At your level, you can be a little more arrogant.”

“Thank you for praising me like that.”

Jo Minjun started to smile. The competition was over and a lot of

them gathered together outside the competition grounds. Rachel was in that crowd as well. As soon as Rachel arrived, the majority of the epicureans looked like they were dying to go speak to her. But that was not just the case for the epicureans. Even the other demi chefs that took part in the competition were the same way. Rachel looked toward her demi chefs and started to smile.

“Good work. I was worried you might be too nervous, but I worried for nothing.”

“Teacher, your gaze was more difficult to handle than thousands of eyes. At least to me. That was why I wasn’t very nervous.”

“That’s a praise right?”

“That’s how big of an impact you have on me, Teacher.”

Jo Minun mischievously laughed as he responded. At that moment, someone suddenly hugged Jo Minjun’s neck from behind him. They then whispered in his ear in a husky voice.

“Then what about my impact?”

“.....Kaya. What are you doing in front of all these people?”

“That’s going to become your catch phrase or something. You’re always nagging at me when people are around.”

Kaya started to grumble as she let go. Emily looked toward them with a slightly foreign expression.

“I did hear that the two of you were dating, but it is kind of odd seeing it with my own eyes.”

“Don’t worry. I’m sure I’ll feel the same way when I see you with Alan, Emily.”

Kaya casually responded back. IT was pretty relaxed, as if she had no reason to worry now that Emily was no longer her judge. Emily looked toward Rachel with an embarrassed expression.

“Anyways, congratulations Rachel. No, thank you. As I expected, there is nobody who can make me so overwhelmed with food like

you.”

“I think Alan will be sad to hear that?”

“Let him be sad. That idiot needs to suffer a bit.”

Seeing Emily grumble like that, they must have recently fought. Jeremy Started to smile as he asked.

“Anyways, what are you going to do with the prize money? \$30,000.”

“Minjun said some pretty memorable words earlier.”

Rachel looked toward Jo Minjun. Jo Minjun tried to remember what he said. He didn’t know what Rachel was talking about. Rachel slowly continued to speak.

““The reason we were able to have this glorious moment is all thanks to our teacher. Thank you for cherishing and teaching these lacking students. We are always thankful and we love you.’ I was very thankful that you said something like that, Minjun.”

“.....I heard it is best to be honest with your feelings.”

Jo Minjun responded with an embarrassed expression. Rachel started to smile as she started to speak again.

“That was why I had this thought as well. The Reason I could win this competition, is because all of you properly completed your mission as my hands. So of course.....”

Rachel continued in a soft voice.

“The prize money belongs to all of you.”

Chapter 190: Searching for the Roots (1)

#Rose Island Main Branch wakes up from its 10 year long slumber.

Memory is something that feels like it is within your grasp but is actually just outside the range. I'm sure at the time it was difficult and painful, but just the fact that time has passed makes it possible to fondly reflect upon that time with nostalgia...memories really are that are beyond our control.

Because of that, when I heard that the main branch of Rose Island was preparing to resurface, I was happy but concerned at the same time. Was this main branch really perfect and flawless like in my memories? Is it possible that my mind erased the bad and preserved only the positives of Rose Island?

Thankfully, I was able to wash away most of that concern. The 53rd LA Cooking Competition. There was quite a lot of talk about this year's competition because of the rumor that Rose Island would be taking part. The people who lack confidence gave up long before the competition began, and the industry giants who would normally not care about this competition showed up to face off against Rose Island. Maybe they were thinking that they could catch a toothless Rose Island.

But the results were an overwhelming victory for Rose Island. The judges unanimously voted Rose Island as the winning team. This does not just mean that they cooked well. Not only did they cook well, they put an overbearing charm on the plate to seduce everyone.

One more amazing fact is that the genre Rose Island used to capture that charm was none other than molecular gastronomy. Rachel Rose seems to have sent a message through the competition. Her cooking is not stuck in the past; it is walking in the present along with the other chefs. Through this I.....

“Is it the news?”

“No. Blog. Seems to be a fan of Teacher Rachel. Of course there are no old epicureans who are not fans of Teacher Rachel.”

“.....I’m kind of jealous. I want to learn under someone like that too.”

“Try knocking on our door once Grand Chef is over.”

“There needs to be an availability.”

“Who knows? Something might appear. We might expand the shop or something.”

Kaya did not respond to that. Night time. The two of them had come out to the beach for a walk once again. Sitting on the sandy ground breathing in the ocean air. Kaya slowly started to speak.

“Are your parents well?”

“Same as usual. I do call them everyday, but they still seem to be worried. They don’t listen even when I tell them there is no reason to worry. What about your mom?”

“She’s worried. What else can parents do but worry for their children. I think she’ll slowly move to LA. She said she took care of the market already.”

“And.....your dad?”

Kaya hesitated at that question. No matter how much she understood and forgave him, there was no way for that pain to easily be washed away. They did talk on the phone from time to time, but Kaya had to suppress her emotions each time. She needed to hold back her anger that kept trying to come back up.

Kaya just quietly sat there hugging her knees. Jo Minjun put a hand on Kaya’s knee with a sad expression. Kaya rubbed her cheek on his hand as she gently looked toward Jo Minjun.

“I’m doing the right thing, right?”

“Of course. You are Protecting your family.”

“Mom didn’t seem too happy that I met with dad.”

“Makes sense. I understand what Mrs. Grace is feeling. She raised you all by herself and he wants to act like a dad now that you are successful. I’m sure she’s angry about that.”

“I don’t want my mom to be hurt.”

She had a disappointed voice. Jo Minjun caressed Kaya’s knee. The breeze was cold. He was worried that her bare legs were cold, but there was nothing he could do for her other than to talk.”

“Everybody has that type of thought. Parents while looking at their child suffering from a cold, children watching their parents get older. In my case, seeing your face look so sad like that..... I wish you wont be hurting. However, Kaya. There is no injury that heals without pain. Since the injury is already there, we should not be praying for it to not hurt. We need to put medicine on the injury that is already there.”

“.....Medicine. Do you think I have any?”

“People who have never been hurt do not prepare any medicine. Kaya, you have already been hurt way too much. That is why your pockets probably have all sorts of medicine in them. Nowlet’s use some for your mom as well.”

Kaya did not say anything for a bit before crawling into Minjun’s arms like a little kid. She then closed her eyes and slowly started to speak.

“I think you must be the person who is putting the medicine on me. You said it earlier. People who have never been hurt do not have any medicine. So then do you.....have that many injuries as well?”

It was an unexpected question. Jo Minjun rolled his eyes. To be honest, his injuries were not from now, but from before he came back to the past. Living a life he did not want. The concern of his

parents. The bleak future. The kitchen experience that was not going the way he wanted it to go. It was a broken life. The thing that put some medicine on that terrible life was the life of someone named Kaya Lotus. Jo Minjun started to speak. He whispered in her ear thanking her in a way she would not understand.

“There is someone who.....already put some medicine on my injuries. So don’t worry.”

“Who?”

“Someone really cool. I hope that one day, you become like that person. No, you will become like that person. I believe it will happen.”

Kaya started to glare at Jo Minjun with a suspicious glare. She then asked in a somewhat nervous voice.

“Is it a woman?”

“Yes.”

“Is she prettier than me?”

“That is a really difficult question.”

“.....Are you trying to say there is someone prettier than your girlfriend? Just who is it. That bit..... I mean that woman?”

“Are you going to go pull her hair out if you know?”

“No, I can’t do that. No matter what, she was the person who healed your injuries. This is what I would say if I saw her.”

She started to speak in a rough voice.

“Thank you for taking care of my private property. But he is mine now. So even if you are jealous, don’t even think about it. What do you think? Am I a pretty cool girlfriend?”

“I don’t know whether you are cool or notbut I do know one thing. That question earlier. I will answer it now. Obviously, you are

Jo Minjun smiled.

“Much prettier than that woman.”

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After the competition ended, the Rose Island kitchen became much more active. It was normal. Until now, the only thing that confirmed they were part of the legendary Rose Island was the building and Rachel's existence. However, the competition helped them really experience where they were and who they were with.

Of course the bakers felt it to a lesser degree, but it was difference for these people who were always helping the demi chefs from the side. They were smiling all day long and full of bright energy even while doing the difficult tasks. They seemed to be really proud.

That was why Maya could not understand. She asked in a cautious voice.

“Chef Minjun. Can I ask you something?”

“Go ahead.”

“You won at the tasting and you won the competition as well. So why is it that you don't seem to be happy these days?”

“Do I seem that way?”

Jo Minjun looked toward Maya in surprise. Maya nodded her head. She had no choice but to feel that way. Ever since the competition ended, Jo Minjun seemed to be crazily engaged in cooking. Not only did he do the molecular gastronomy homework that Rafael assigned him, he even made traditional dishes as well.

He had no choice but to do so. If he only focused on molecular gastronomy and his hands stiffened toward traditional cooking, it would be so sad. Rafael didn't say anything to Jo Minjun's effort either. He also understood the need to do so.

The reason Maya thought it was weird was that Jo Minjun did not seem to be happy about something even though he was putting

in so much effort. It wasn't like his output was not good compared to the effort. His dishes were always tasty and fresh. But he still seemed like he wasn't satisfied.....Maya could only think things like 'does a genius feel something different than us?'

But the reason Jo Minjun was frustrated was slightly different than what Maya was thinking.

‘.....level.’

To be more specific, it was not his cooking level but his tasting level. He felt like his cooking level will naturally go up as his skills go up, but the tasting level was something that needed like an accidental opportunity to rise. The problem wasn't that he wanted the level to go up. Rather than the level going up, he needed his tasting skills to rise to the point that the level would go up.

Say what you know and cook what you know. That is what Jo Minjun thought. How could someone who doesn't know about taste cook a delicious dish? That was why Jo Minjun thought it was more imperative for him to raise his tasting skills than his cooking skills.

“The first requirement was resolved so I just need to meet the next requirement.....”

“What? What requirement?”

“Ah. Nothing. And thank you for caring. It is not that there is a problem. I just hit a wall like chefs tend to do from time to time. I'm sure I'll get past it soon.”

“When you say a wall, what kind of wall are you talking about?”

It was an unexpected voice. Jo Minjun quickly turned around in shock and noticed Rachel curiously staring at him. Jo Minjun hesitated for a moment before slowly starting to speak.

“I can feel that my tasting skills as a gourmet has not reached its potential, but I can't figure out what I need to fix.”

“What? Chef Minjun has absolute taste. But your tasting skill is not complete?”

“Tasting skills and tongue sensitivity are two different issues. That is experience and thought.”

Maya seemed to be really confused by Minjun’s answer. But getting her to understand wasn’t important right now. Jo Minjun asked Rachel.

“Teacher. Is there any problem you can see in me?”

“What do you think your problem is?”

“I’m not sure. Could it be the things I like? I like things that have very clear tastes. Rather than wanting something using just one ingredient, I want each and every ingredient to come alive if they are being used in the dish. At the same time, they should not get in each other’s way and create a good balance and harmony. But of course there aren’t many dishes like that..... with that being the case, I tend to enjoy dishes that only use one or two ingredients. Could this be a problem?”

“Taste is based on personal preference. Personal preference cannot become a problem. In fact, that will end up being the thing that makes you stand out. Of course it would be a problem if you only eat that and cannot enjoy any other food.....but I don’t think that is the case with you, is it?”

He nodded his head. Rachel crossed her arms as if she was deep in thought before slowly starting to speak.

“You mentioned your mom was a bad cook. You said that was the reason you haven’t been able to have a good tasting experience since you were young.”

“.....I am a bit sorry to my mom but yes. Ah, do you think that is the problem? Is it because I didn’t get to eat good dishes growing up?”

Jo Minjun’s expression became serious. If that was the case, that

was not something he could overcome. Rachel did not agree or disagree with that statement. She then slowly started to speak once more.

“Since it was hard for you to eat a tasty dish, you probably had a lot of admiration for really good dishes. But of the things you could eat, there probably were not many proper dishes. At most, it would be a decent restaurant in the neighborhood. But even that probably wowed you. Later on, you probably stopped being satisfied with that and started to cook your own food.

“.....It was pretty similar.”

“That was why even though you spent the majority of your life in your home country, you haven’t been able to properly enjoy Korean dishes. Even though your roots have always been in one place, those roots were not buried very deep. Do you get what I am saying?”

A sudden shock went through Jo Minjun’s brain. The thing he had always pushed off as not being important was being focused by Rachel right now. Living in Korea for 20 years, no, really 30 years.....he had never had a good Korean meals.

Jo Minjun was used to cooking Western dishes and not Korean dishes. But just because you can cook Western dishes does not mean that you can cook Korean dishes. Of course the story would be different if he grew up eating Western dishes, but no matter what, he was a Korean person through and through. Even if he was speaking English, the foundation of his language skills would be in Korean...similarly, the first steps of his tasting abilities were created through Korean dishes. He could not leave his roots scattered in a mess like this.

But.....

“Do I need to go visit Korea?”

It was realistically impossible. The open was only a few months

away. There was no way he could leave right now. But Rachel started to smile as she shook her head.

“Is there a reason to do that? Did you already forget what is 30 mins away from here?”

“.....Ah!”

Jo Minjun let out a gasp. Rachel continued in a confident voice.

“Why do you need to get on a plane? There is already a Korea inside LA.”

Chapter 191: Searching for the Roots (2)

Koreatown. It was nearby, but he had never been to this neighborhood. Jo Minjun started to speak in a nervous voice.

“But will Koreatown be enough? I feel like it would be difficult to replicate the authentic flavor because of the localization from being in the US.....”

“I’m sure there are differences compared to the food in Korea. However, it is the best option you have right now. You are not looking for the root of Korean cuisine. You are searching for your own roots. For homework of that level.....I’m confident you can take care of it in Koreatown.”

“Okay. Thank you. Is there anything else you can add as a hint.....?”

Jo Minjun’s eyes were sparkling. It was to the point that Maya was about to laugh in disbelief. But he had no choice. It might look like he was asking someone who made him food to feed it to him, but he wanted to hear any extra tip Rachel may have.

Thankfully, Rachel responded to Jo Minjun’s expectations.

“Do not try to represent everyone. That is all I can tell you.”

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Starting from the next day, Jo Minjun headed to Koreatown at least once a day. It was not that hard. If the traffic wasn’t bad, he could get there in about 30 minutes. The problem though...

“.....There’s so much traffic.”

Was that there was a lot of traffic right now. The LA roads during rush hour was like hell. Jo Minjun was in the middle of that hell right now. He turned his head with an apologetic expression. Anderson was repeatedly putting his foot on the brake and off the brake with a tired expression.

Jo Minjun started to speak.

“Sorry. You must be tired.”

“Yes.”

“..... Lisa. Are you okay?”

Jo Minjun turned to look at the back seat. Ella and Lisa were sitting in the back. There wasn't a special reason the three of them were with them. Anderson served as the driver every time he went to Koreatown because he still did not have a license yet, and Koreatown was close to Downtown and Hollywood, so it was easy to have meals with Chloe and Kaya as well. With that being the case.....

“I'm okay, but Ella.....”

Lisa looked toward Ella with a worried expression. Ella was holding tightly onto her female doll with an apron as she was shaking her legs. It was not because she was cold. Jo Minjun was used to this type of shaking. Jo Minjun looked back toward Anderson.

“Is there a restroom nearby?”

“Why. Is it urgent?”

Jo Minjun whispered to him in a quiet voice.

“Our little princess seems to need it urgently.”

“.....Just hold it a little more. We're almost there. It'll be faster to go in the restaurant than randomly looking for one around here.”

It really wasn't a lie. By the time Ella's leg shake was starting to become extremely bad, the car had arrived at the front of the restaurant. Seeing Ella rush into the restroom while holding Lisa's hand, Jo Minjun slowly got out of the car. He was used to the Korean writing that was in fancy calligraphy.

“La Joomak.....”

La seemed to be just the Korean pronunciation of LA. He couldn't tell whether he should call it weird, or fashionable. It was an odd name. Anderson started to ask.

“What does La Joomak mean?”

“I think La is just pronouncing LA directly, while a Joomak is what they used to call places that sold alcohol and food in the olden days.”

“If it was in the olden days, do they not exist anymore? Makes sense. Just looking at this place makes it feel really old.”

Anderson was justified in his statement. La Joomak was built like the old Korean tile houses. Even though Koreatown was called the Korea inside the US, it was not common to see such a building. Even in Korea, you would need to go to somewhere like Hanok Village to see such tile houses. Jo Minjun started to ask.

“What do you think?”

“It should be fun since it is exotic. It feels different than the Chinese roofs.”

“The Chinese roofs seem fierce while the Korean one feels more calm. The food should be that way too. I'm sure you already know from the last couple of days.”

“To be honest with you, just based on first impressions, I have the highest expectations of this one.”

“I'm sure you do. You were the one who wanted to come here.”

Jo Minjun started to smile as he answered. Honestly speaking, Jo Minjun did not have any thoughts about coming here. The reason was simple. It was expensive. It was also not somewhere he needed to reference right now. This place seemed to serve more of the Imperial Feast than regular dishes.

The reason he was going around eating Korean food was to truly understand the cuisine that he frequently ate as a kid. The food

that developed his palate. He needed to understand that in order to properly set the foundation as an epicurean. However, an Imperial Feast may still be considered Korean food, but it had nothing in common with the food Minjun ate as a kid. Of course the taste would be more refined, but it wouldn't do anything to develop his palate.....he didn't think there would be anything he could learn from it.

Of course La Joomak was a good restaurant. It may not have a Michelin star, but it was one of the most recommended restaurants. It was always so busy that you needed to make your reservation about a month in advance. However, Jo Minjun did not need to wait long to come here.

The person smiling in front of the entrance was the reason he didn't have to wait.

"Ah, you're here. Minjun, Anderson, the rest of your group is already inside."

"It's been a while Chef Tae Hoon."

"Ay, why are you being so formal and calling me chef. Just Tae Hoon is fine."

Lee Tae Hoon was a chef at La Joomak. Other than the head chef and sous chef, he was the third highest ranking chef in La Joomak. The structure was a little different because it was a Korean restaurant, but if you were to put it in Rose Island's terms, he was like the team leader of the demi chefs. Jo Minjun started to smile as he responded.

"Thank you for preparing this for us."

"No worries. We had a canceled reservation, so we would be the ones losing money if we didn't fill it. I'm sure Rose Island has quite the headache with reser.....ah, you are not open yet."

"Yes. Not long now though."

"It's probably really busy right now. Ah, it is this room."

Lee Tae Hoon opened the jangjymoon. Once that happened, Anderson subconsciously let out a gasp. The other side of the door was covered in glass walls, and sunlight was gently entering the room through gaps from the garden and trees.

It was traditional that you needed to take your shoes off before entering the room. There was a low wooden table with cushions around it, and there was a large pit underneath the table to comfortably put your legs. There were two women sitting around the table already. It was Kaya and Chloe.

“Oh, Minjun. You’re here.”

“Why are you so late?”

“The traffic was terrible. Everybody seemed to be following me. They must have really wanted to see me.”

Jo Minjun jokingly answered before sitting down across from Kaya. Anderson shook his head as he sat down next to him. He then had a discontent expression.

“.....If they were going to do it like this, why don’t they just have tables and chairs instead of digging a pit and putting cushions?”

“Why not. It’s pretty.”

“It’s pretty.....but I’m looking at the practicality.”

“If everyone had used this type of method, you would be saying that at regular restaurants about their tables. Why do they make these chairs with such long legs. It would be easier to just dig a pit.”

“Your girlfriend sure knows how to talk.”

Kaya started to snicker. As Anderson started to shake his head thinking here she goes again, Chloe turned her head. Her gaze was turned toward the jangjymoon. There was a shadow on the other side of the door struggling to open it. However, she must not know that it opens sideways, as the door was moving back and forth.

In the end, Kaya stood up and approached the door. Once she pushed the door sideways to open it, the struggling Ella looked back and forth between Kaya and the door in shock. Kaya had a mocking smile of victory on her face.

“You push this to the side like this. You don’t even know something like this?”

“Ah!”

Ella did not respond to Kaya’s provocation. She could not respond. Her eyes started to tear up like stars. Then her lips started to open wide with a smile.

“Ghloe! Ghloe fairy-nim!”

Ella put her pink rabbit socks on display as she started to run toward Chloe. Chloe started to look toward Ella with nervousness. Ella fumbled with her fingers with a completely red face as she pushed forward the doll that was on her side. A doll with black hair, a gentle smile, and an apron. It was a doll modeled after Chloe.

“I really really like fairy-nim!”

“Uh.....why am I a fairy?”

“You did it on TV. Sandwich, appear! Yap! And then a sandwich came out.”

Chloe’s gaze moved up as she started to think about it. Now that she thought about it, she did recall a broadcast with such a concept. Ella took out a pen from the backpack on her shoulder. This was the reason Jo Minjun brought Ella and Lisa to dinner today. Ella was a fan of Chloe. An extremely passionate fan.

“Could you please sign the apron on this doll?”

“What should I write on it?”

“Please write To Ella.”

Chloe started to smile and move the pen. Seeing this, Kaya

started to speak in an annoyed voice.

“She hates me but likes Chloe quite a bit.”

“Just be understanding. It is probably because you are love rivals. Plus, Chloe is really popular with the children.”

Lisa answered as she entered the room. Kaya, who had been grumbling, saw Lisa’s feet. To be specific, she saw the stockings on Lisa’s feet. Kaya then remembered that she was not wearing any socks and quickly moved back next to Chloe and put her legs under the table. She then started to mumble in an awkward voice.

“I think this is too erotic.”

“Erotic? What is?”

“People without socks need to show their bare feet.”

“.....I’m not sure what is so erotic about bare feet?”

Anderson gave Kaya a look. It was the moment Kaya was about to retort back to Anderson. After acting cute next to Chloe for a while, Ella ran around the table and sat down next to Minjun. Having Ella there made more sense than having Lisa there, but Kaya didn’t really like that.

“Why are you sitting there?”

“Am I not allowed to sit here?”

“..... I guess you can.”

“Hmph.”

Ella rudely scoffed and turned her head. Chloe seemed to think Ella was really cute as she had a bright smile on her face. Jo Minjun was the same way. Seeing that, Kaya reached her feet underneath the table and pinched Minjun’s calf. Jo Minjun pushed backwards in pain and glared at Kaya. Kaya’s smile seemed to be telling him to be good, as she tapped on his leg with her foot.

‘.....So childish.’

He really wanted to let out a sigh, but he was worried about what terrible things might happen under the table if he really did that.

It did not take long for the food to arrive. They did not need to even order. That was one of the unique features of this restaurant. There was only one menu item, but you could not take it lightly.

A few moments later, the jangjymoon opened once more. Once it did, everybody was shocked. How could they not be? There was so much food that they could probably eat until they were stuffed even if there were ten of them. Kaya was amazed.

“Wow. I think this is the grandest feast I’ve ever had in my life.”

“Me.....too.”

Jo Minjun looked toward the table with a blank expression. He had only seen such grand feasts in movies. There were so many dishes that he had lost count. Ella must have not felt like it was real, as she was completely stiff and looked uncomfortable. Lisa felt like she couldn’t even eat any of it and looked around the table.

“.....Even if you took a bite out of every dish, you would probably full until lunch tomorrow.”

“I feel the same way.”

Jo Minjun quietly put the rice in his mouth first. The feel of the short rice kernels breaking down in his mouth was chewy and savory. Just tasting the rice helped him understand the level of this place.

As for the banchan, there were a lot of dishes that were foreign to him. Just the ingredients alone were things he was not used to seeing in Korea. There was no way general Korean cuisine had something like pickled artichokes.

Jo Minjun made sure to eat at least a small amount of rice every time he ate a bite of a side dish. You wouldn’t normally do this in a Western restaurant, but a lot of Korean dishes were only complete once you ate it with rice. He could feel that to be true as he ate the

different banchans around the table.

Of course something like Tteok-bokki was an exception. Imperial Tteok-bokki that was boiled in a soy-sauce based broth. The rice cake that was shaped like a bird's egg was placed in his mouth with a piece of shank and paprika, and the sweetness of the vegetable created a perfect harmony with the juice from the meat and the seasoning on the rice cake. This was the most familiar dish for Jo Minjun among the Imperial Feast items. Because of that, he could tell that it was a really well-made Tteok-bokki. However.....

“Bleh. This is weird.”

It did not seem to suite Ella's tastes. The feeling of rice cake was one of the things foreigners found the most odd amongst Korean dishes. It was hard to get used to even after eating it multiple times. That slippery texture felt really weird. Jo Minjun looked toward Kaya and asked.

“Kaya. What do you think? In my opinion, this place seems to focus more on retaining the authentic flavor than localizing their food to meet the needs of the people.....is it hard to eat?”

“The overall feeling I get is that there are a lot of dishes with garlic and sesame seeds. The fragrance of the sesame oil is quite unique as well... it will be very difficult for people who are very picky eaters.

“Probably. Even in Korea, there are people who like the fragrance of coriander and those who hate it.”

Kaya's words made sense. Dishes tended to show the characteristics of the nation quite deeply. The reaction to it was usually half and half. There were people who enjoyed the strong and shocking taste, but there were also people who found it difficult to eat.

“It makes me think about a lot of things. Even if it not just Korean food but cooking food of any nation is it more

important to retain the authentic flavor of that country, or is it important to localize it to meet the needs of the customers.”

“I personally think both have their own charms. If you localize it, you can get closer to the general public. However, if you keep the authenticity, it might hold more sway toward epicureans. But even if epicureans say they aren’t biased, they all have the flavor of their home country ingrained in their palates. The majority of them tend to prefer restaurants that have localized.”

“.....I think I can understand the meaning behind Teacher Rachel telling me to find my identity through Korean food. But it is kind of hard. I just keep having odd thoughts like this.”

“Can I say something?”

Chloe cautiously raised her hand. Jo Minjun nodded his head and answered.

“Of course. Do you have any advice?”

“Not necessarily an advice.....but I wanted to tell you my experience. You know that I specialize more in Chinese cuisine than Western cuisine. But to be honest, mine is not traditional Chinese cuisine, but Americanized Chinese cuisine. Of course there are too many types of Chinese cuisine to call it all Chinese cuisine..... but anyways, this is what I want to say. It may feel like you are losing the authenticity when you put the word localized in front of it, but that is not necessarily the case. Even if you go to China, the characteristics of the dish will be different in the different regions. That is why I just consider Americanized Chinese cuisine to be like just another region of China. Wouldn’t Korean cuisine be the same way?”

“.....If that is the case, what am I supposed to find from this?”

Chloe could not respond to that question. But Kaya casually threw out an answer.

“The stem.”

“Stem?”

“There has to be the foundational cooking method for all Korean cuisine. What and how much of an ingredient is used is the second question. The biggest question is the method you use to cook the dishes. And one more thing.”

Kaya lightly pushed down on Jo Minjun’s foot.

“Stop debating while you eat. You’re going to get indigestion. Sheesh.”

Chapter 192: Searching for the Roots (3)

“.....What can I do? It is my job.”

Jo Minjun answered in a disappointed voice. Ella turned her head and glared sharply at Kaya. Anderson picked up some japchae with his chopsticks before starting to speak.

“You really feel like you are being served a feast when there are so many dishes like this. But I feel like it is too extravagant at the same time. There is too much that I feel like I can’t even try everything before I get full.”

“There is something I heard in the past. My country used to have a lot of economic problems until only a few decades ago. There weren’t many people who could eat until they were completely full. That was why there was a lot of longing and desire for food. Of course, I haven’t personally experienced that time but anyways, for the young people who lived through that time, having such a feast that seems like it would be impossible to finish brought an unbelievable sense of happiness for them.”

“I know what that feels like.”

Kaya started to speak with a bitter smile. Jo Minjun looked toward Kaya. Kaya looked around the table with a nostalgic gaze.

“Even if the world has gotten better, the poor people are still poor. And the biggest issue for the poor is always food. Eating a little more of something even if it tastes terrible. Eating like that was our way of relieving stress. That is why I like this spread. My dream was to be able to eat a lot of delicious food.”

Chloe patted Kaya’s shoulder with pity. Kaya continued in a mischievous tone.

“But now, I am able to eat at a place like this. I guess even I have succeeded in a way.”

“No need to guess. You have succeeded in a very cool way.”

Jo Minjun smiled as he responded. Kaya lightly smiled before caressing Jo Minjun's calf with her toes, as if she was saying thanks. Jo Minjun suddenly became nervous and looked around at the others. It was obvious to say that nobody else had realized what happened. Jo Minjun let out a cough before starting to speak.

“What are your thoughts about the food you ate? Lisa, what do you like the most?”

“For meI like this one the most.”

Lisa lifted up her chopsticks and pointed at a dish. The dish she was pointing to was not what Jo Minjun expected. Jo Minjun asked with surprise.

“Samgyetang?”

“Yes. I can feel that they put in a lot of time and effort for this dish. I don't know what kind of herb they boiled with it, but it is quite memorable because it smells like a tree I feel like it brings out the unique nature of Korean food.”

“What do you think is the unique nature of Korean food?”

“For Korean food, wouldn't it have to be slow food?”

“...Mm. That is similar to my opinion as well. I think that the most charismatic part of Korean food is in the broth. As for this samgyetang, for being a broth dish, they probably didn't boil it for too long. Chicken becomes dry if you boil it too much. In fact, they might have boiled everything in advance before putting the chicken in at the end.”

Broths had a tendency to become more flavorful the longer it was boiled, so Lisa wasn't wrong. Compared to the vegetables or pickled dishes that usually come to mind for Korean food, there were a lot more different types of broths. Vegetables could be seen as a type of salad, and Western cuisines used pickled dishes quite a bit as well.

But broths was different. If you wanted to find some type of

broth in Western cuisine, there were thinkings like seafood soup or stews, but even the seafood soup felt like it was only used to elevate the flavor of the upcoming main entree. You couldn't expect the clean finished product you get in a broth with a soup. It made sense. Unless it was an extremely disorganized course meal, something else would definitely come out after the soup.

Anderson started to speak.

“To be honest, I was never wowed by a broth dish. Of course, they taste good. But I feel like something is missing as you swallow it. If it is thicker, you at least get a sense of it filling your mouth

“I know what you mean. The issue is that you don't really feel like you are eating something.”

“Similar. Of course, there are some solid components, but Asians seem to get a satisfaction out of the broth itself. I personally prefer the solids over the broth.”

“Everybody would agree the solids are tastier.....no, the more I think about it, if I was told I could only eat one of the two, the broth might actually be better.”

It was quite interesting if you thought about it. Jo Minjun knew what he would personally prefer. He wanted something that brought out the flavor of each ingredient and wanted something that could harmonize the flavor of those ingredients as they hit his tongue. Jo Minjun based his opinion of a dish based on that harmonization.

In that sense, a broth was best at creating a harmony of flavor. In a way, it aligned most with his specialty, sauces. A broth is really just a sauce that you could drink.

‘.....But why is it that I have never taken the time to dive into the tradition of broths?’

Broths aligned with his personal preference and cooking

philosophy, but he had never officially cooked a broth before. But it really wasn't that odd. In order to really bring out the taste of a broth, the majority required a significant amount of time. Since he came to the United States, he never had the time to stick next to a pot all day.

However, the important thing was that he had almost forgotten about the broth dishes. He did work with soups and stews every so often, but he was not very interested in them either. His current section may be molecular gastronomy, but he shouldn't have completely forgotten about it. Forgetting about it was the same as not having it.

Broths were a symbol of Korean food, and Korean food was the existence that taught Jo Minjun about food. Although Jo Minjun himself might not be aware of it, the reason he ended up liking dishes in a liquid state such as sauces may be the influence of these broths. For him to live without even thinking about such influential component of his life, it was like flying in the sky with your wings folded up.

“.....Broths.”

Jo Minjun scooped up some of the samgyetang's broth and put it in his mouth. On top of the light flavor of the chicken was the fragrance of many different herbs. It really was a good combination. It was almost amazing that such flavor could be brought out with those bitter herbs.

He took a couple more sips. His heart was whispering in his ear. His own experiences and biases were whispering to him.

– Broths do not work in Western cuisine. They think of it as a way for the poor people to fill themselves up. It does not fit with your path.

‘The deciding factor for the quality of a dish is not the origin, but the chef.’

– But how will you get past the prejudices of the people in this area? Sure. Asian people may like it. But do you plan on getting congratulated by the Asians while being shunned by the rest?

‘.....If the origin of my sense of taste is in broths, I need to at least know how to enjoy it.’

– People tend to put their hearts into even drawing a single line. Can’t you tell by those psychological tests? You draw a tree and a house, and they can break down the type of person you are from those few lines you drew on a piece of paper. You think cooking will be any different? If you like broths, that will show up in your dishes. And that feelingyou think it is enough to charm others?

Jo Minjun’s spoon stopped moving. He glared at the samgyetang with a stiff expression. Ella looked toward Minjun with a worried gaze.

“Uncle Minjun. What’s wrong? Does your stomach hurt?”

“No, Ella. I just have a lot to think about it.”

“What now? What is the problem?”

Kaya asked in a blunt tone. Although the tone may have been blunt, her eyes showed she was worried. Even her feet underneath the table was cautiously caressing Jo Minjun’s heel.

“I keep thinking that it is difficult to be a chef in a foreign country.”

“What? Why?”

“My sense of taste is different compared to Americans. But I can’t just force my sense of taste to meet the American need. If I do, I would just become a fraud.”

Chloe listened to Jo Minjun’s words before quietly nodding her head. She had the same type of concern before. No, she still had that concern. After growing up with her mom’s Chinese cuisine,

her sense of taste was not Americanized either. Chloe slowly started to speak.

“You can’t help it. You need to localize it to a degree. If you slowly start to match it as time goes by.....”

“Why would you change it? What is wrong with either of your sense of taste?”

Kaya cut Chloe off and answered in a slightly angry voice. She seemed to be really angry, as she was huffing and puffing as she pretty much growled.

“No. Fine. It is slightly different from the local sense of taste 100 out of 100 times. But what is wrong with that? You just have to make a dish that makes people think that your preference is cool and stylish.”

“.....I know what you are trying to say. But is that really possible without any localizing at all? Look at the foie gras. Westerners tend to slice it into large slices, while Easterners cut it into the size of about two fingers width. It is because customers think it is too greasy if it is any bigger. Szechuan food is the same way. In the Szechuan province, you use a lot of Mala and peppercorn. But the Americanized Szechuan food cannot do that. If they make it as spicy as they would do in Szechuan, it is impossible for others to eat. It is the same with coriander leaves or sesame leaves.”

“So are you trying to say the two of your senses of tastes are bad?”

“.....It is not an easy path.”

“Have you ever had it easy? Why are you suddenly acting so weak?”

“Kaya. Not everyone can always be strong. There are things we are weak at, times we are weak.”

“No. You can’t be like that.”

Kaya started to glare at Jo Minjun. Jo Minjun could feel Kaya's toes clenching on top of his foot. She must be putting strength in her entire body. He could even see that her whole body seemed to be shaking. He suddenly felt upset. It was not that he was angry. Kaya's feelings were clearly delivered to him. Kaya quietly continued to speak.

"I said this to the chefs at the Grand Chef finale. I said that I respect you. That is why you... at least in front of medon't show such a side. I am not saying don't be weak. You can struggle. You can be in pain. But, don't ever lose your confidence. Do not think that the things you have are not worth much."

"You.....really think there is value in my sense of taste?"

"You said it yourself. If you change who you are, you just end up a fraud. And I like the real Minjun. I respect the real Minjun. You don't need something like a sense of taste that can cater to everyone. You are Jo Minjun. You are Kaya Lotus's man. Go make others believe that what you think is delicious is really delicious."

Jo Minjun had a complicated expression after hearing Kaya's words. He suddenly remembered what Rachel said. When she told him to research Korean food, her last addition was 'Do not try to represent everyone.' Maybe what Rachel was talking about was based on the fact that she knew what Jo Minjun would focus on.

"We are chefs. If we want to cater to the tastes of our customers, we shouldn't compromise. We need to dominate them. Yes, we can lower the amount of herbs if something is too fragrant or decrease the amount of foie gras if it is too greasy. But we cannot compromise like that. I don't want to be a chef who runs away. I don't want you cooking like that either. Minjun. Please."

Kaya subconsciously stepped on Minjun's foot before continuing.

"Win. Be a chef who can defeat any type of customer."

Kaya's voice cleared all of his worries.

It was not that she gave him an answer to his problem. Someone who does not know the answer could not give the answer. All Kaya did was share her thoughts.

And Jo Minjun wanted to give Kaya what she wanted. If she did not want him to hesitate, he didn't want to hesitate. He didn't want to worry. He could not become a scared rabbit. It was at this moment that he made up his mind.

[You have stepped outside the confines of objectivity and have accepted your own sense of taste. Your oppressed sense of taste has improved!]

[The conditions for reaching Tasting level 9 has been cleared!]

Messages rang in his mind. Jo Minjun started to think. Just what was it that increased his tasting level right now? Was it Kaya? Or was it this broth? After thinking about it for a moment, Jo Minjun soon started to smile. It was a useless concern. The answer was obvious. He started to speak.

“As usual, you are my answer.”

The spoon was lifted once more.

Chapter 193: Searching for the Roots (4)

Jo Minjun put another spoonful of samgyetang broth in his mouth. The fact that his mindset changed didn't necessarily instantly change the flavor. However, the feeling he got from the taste was definitely different. It was because he no longer thought that he needed to give up on this because of efficiency. The thought that was now in his head was about what he could do to utilize this taste properly to win people over.

Not giving up, but having hope. That small change alone made the table of food feel much happier than before. Satisfaction was on Jo Minjun's face, and Kaya started to smile while watching Minjun as well. Lisa asked in a teasing voice.

"Is it always like this?"

"Hmm? What?"

"The two of you. I know you are a chef couple, but I didn't know you dated while making it so obvious that you are chefs."

"It is because of Minjun. He's always trying to open up discussions about food."

Anderson answered as if he was tired. He took a peek toward Chloe. She looked calm on the outside, but she was probably hurting quite a bit. Nobody would enjoy watching the person they like acting lovie-dovie with someone else. Anderson then looked toward Jo Minjun. Jo Minjun might seem dense at times, but he was a deep thinker and was pretty sharp about people's feelings.

'.....Did he really do it on purpose?'

Maybe it is for the best. It would be easier for Chloe to resolve her feelings if he showed her the cold reality rather than giving her mixed signals. It was normal for any couple to seem like they would never break up, but he really could not imagine Kaya and Jo Minjun ever breaking up. After thinking for a while, Anderson

sighed internally before picking up his chopstick.

‘There’s nothing more useless than worrying about someone else’s relationship problems.’

The dinner went on for a while. It could not end quickly because of the number of dishes on the table. Normal people may only eat the food they like, but they were chefs. They wanted to taste every dish, and at the same time, didn’t want any food to go to waste. Of course, the latter was almost impossible to avoid.....

“I can’t eat anymore

Ella looked at the galbi-jjim at the end of a fork with sad eyes. Kaya responded bluntly.

“Then stop eating. You’ll get fat.”

“.....I won’t get fat.”

“If you won’t gain weight because you don’t want to gain weight, there would not be anything called dieting.”

Ella started to glare at Kaya before looking back at the galbi-jjim sadly. Jo Minjun started to smile as he responded.

“If I have a daughter, I want to have a daughter like Ella.”

“.....What? Who says you’re allowed to?”

Kaya asked in an upset voice to show that she had not agreed to that. Ella was the same. She looked toward Minjun with a shocked expression.

“Uncle, you’re going to have a kid?”

“I assume some time in the future I will?”

“..... I don’t want uncle having a kid.”

“Why?”

“Then you won’t play with Ella anymore.”

Ella’s shoulders dropped along with her depressed expression. Jo

Minjun caressed the back of Ella's head.

"Why would I stop playing with you? Don't worry. I will play with you a lot."

".....You are talking like we've already decided to have a kid."

"Eventually we will."

"I never agreed to it. I don't have time to have a kid and raise them because of work."

"I don't know. That's only if I marry you.....ugh."

Jo Minjun started to shake as if he suddenly got shocked, before moving his hand down to caress his thigh. Kaya had pinched him with her toes. Kaya asked with a scary expression.

"Do you want to die?"

".....Fine. I'm sorry."

Jo Minjun answered in a quiet voice. If they end up living together in the future, he could clearly tell who would be in control. Lisa started to speak as if she suddenly remembered something.

"Now that I think about it, you said you planned on living together. Did you figure that out?"

"Not yet. We haven't found a house yet....."

"Ah. Speaking of that."

Chloe started to speak. She continued in an awkward voice."

"Sorry. I'm going to have to decline."

"What? Why?"

Kaya asked in a disappointed voice. Chloe smiled as if to say she was sorry.

"Sorry. It is too complicated to explain in detail. I think it will just be difficult for me."

“There’s no need to be sorry, but

Kaya trailed off. Her face was full of disappointment. It made sense. She was the one who was looking forward to living with Chloe the most. Jo Minjun quietly looked toward Chloe. He then slowly started to speak.

“You thought about it a lot, haven’t you?”

“Yes. I thought about pushing myself a bit, but in the end, I think it will be difficult.”

Those short phrases carried a much deeper meaning than what they said. Chloe clenched her fist under the table so that nobody could see it.

‘.....Yes. Good job, Chloe.’

If she said that she resolved her feelings for him, Jo Minjun would definitely trust her. He was that type of person. But she could not do that. She could not betray him by leaning on his generous nature. She could not betray Kaya.

Maybe this was a confession of its own. Her feelings were still there, and it would be difficult for them to ever go away. It might even reveal that she was lying when she said she resolved her feelings. Maybe that was why, but as Chloe started to feel insecure, Jo Minjun started to speak.

“It’s disappointing, but what can we do? But it is not important whether we live together or not. The important thing is that we are friends and that will not change even if we live apart. Am I right?”

Chloe bit her lips the moment she heard that. She felt like she would cry if she did not do that. Jo Minjun was trying to console her right now. He was being understanding. And he was letting her know. He was telling her that her feelings would not destroy their friendship. Kaya continued on as if to say that was obvious.

“Of course. How many friends really live with each other? It’s

normal to live apart.”

“That is true.”

Jo Minjun started to smile. At that moment, the door opened and Lee Tae Hoon came through the door. He looked toward the table and started to speak.

“Are you done? Should I bring dessert?”

“.....Does the saucier normally come ask about that?”

“Not normally, but it is a different story when the saucier is a fan of the guest. There are also three beautiesno, four beauties.”

Lee Tae Hoon saw Ella’s glare and quickly changed his words. Jo Minjun looked around at the others before nodding his head and responding.

“Yes. Please bring it for us. Ah, also.....would you be able to do me a favor?”

“What is it?”

“I want to take a look around your kitchenI’ve only seen Korean kitchens in movies. I’ve never been inside of one.”

“Mm.....that is not that hard.”

“Me too! I want to go too!”

Ella shot her hand up in the air as she shouted out. Lisa started to scold her with an embarrassed expression.

“No, Ella. You’ll bother the chefs.”

“.....Okay.”

Ella responded in a disappointed voice and lowered her hand. She might be a troublemaker sometimes, but she really listened to her mom well. Lee Tae Hoon smiled before speaking.

“No. It is fine. It is time for the chefs to take a break as well. I’m sure they will enjoy it if such a cute little lady comes to visit.”

Ella lifted her head back up after hearing that and looked toward Lisa with sparkling eyes. In the end, Lisa shook her head as if she had no other choice.

“Fine. But you need to listen to Uncle Minjun, okay? Don’t let go of his hand.”

“Okay! I will!”

Ella smiled brightly before clenching on to Jo Minjun’s arm. Chloe smiled and patted Kaya’s knees after seeing her uncomfortable expression.

“Relax, she’s just a kid.”

“.....I don’t know what you are talking about. I am relaxed.”

“Your fist sure looks to be clenched tightly for being relaxed.”

At that moment, Ella, who was walking while holding Minjun’s hand, turned around and stuck her tongue out toward Kaya. Kaya started to glare, but Ella had already turned back around. Lee Tae Hoon started to speak on their way to the kitchen.

“It will be a bit different than your expectation.”

It was easy to tell why he had said that as soon as they entered the kitchen. Other than a few Korean clay pots, the kitchen was very modern. You could not really tell whether it was a Korean restaurant or a Western restaurant. There were tiles on the wall and floor, and he could see stainless kitchen appliances and refrigerator. Lee Tae Hoon started to speak.

“It doesn’t look as historic as you expected, does it?”

“I guess that was kind of what I was expecting. An island made of wood, or a fire pit made of rocks and sand.”

“It is natural. The outside of the restaurant looks like the old tile houses.”

Ella tapped on Minjun’s back while Lee Tae Hoon was speaking. When Minjun looked down, Ella lifted up both of her arms and

asked.

“Lift me up. I want to see it from up there.”

Jo Minjun lifted Ella up. Thankfully, she was not that heavy. Ella saw the clay pot before letting out a gasp of admiration.

“That looks like a turtle.”

As she said that, an aged man approached them. He reached out his hand. Once Jo Minjun put Ella down and shook the man’s hand, the man started to speak.

“You must be that famous Jo Minjun. I heard a lot about you. I hear you work at Rose Island?”

“Ah, yes.”

“My name is Gregory Adams. I am the head chef of this restaurant.”

Jo Minjun looked shocked at that revelation. How could he not? Gregory was Black. Gregory started to smile as if he could tell what Jo Minjun was thinking.

“Why? Are you shocked that a Black man is working in a Korean restaurant and is the head chef at that?”

“No, well.....yes. To be honest with you, I am a bit shocked.”

“I like that you are honest.”

“The food has a very Korean feel to it. Of course, there is a slight difference, but based on the ingredients used, you can’t even really call it a difference. That is why I was even more shocked.”

“Sometimes, you can see things more clearly when you look at it from the outside. For example, you are Korean, but you are cooking Western cuisine.”

“You’re right. I didn’t think I’d be like this, but I must have my biases as well. I’m sorry.”

“No need to be sorry. Who in this country is clear of any biases?

Even I get uncomfortable and wonder if I shouldn't have gone to a restaurant if I go to eat sushi and see a White person cutting the fish."

Jo Minjun started to laugh. As he picked Ella back up, Gregory started to speak.

"Your daughter?"

"No, a colleague's daughter."

"She's the cutest kid I've seen all year."

"Thank you very much."

Ella shyly laughed as she answered. The conversation was not that long. Jo Minjun did not want to bother them too much. While they were walking back to their room, Ella put her chin on Minjun's neck and started to speak in a sad voice.

"I wish Minjun was my dad and not my uncle."

Jo Minjun stopped moving. He wanted to say something, but it was too heavy of a subject to just say something without thinking about it first. Jo Minjun slowly patted Ella's back before finally starting to speak.

"Do you really want to see your dad?"

".....Yes. Very much."

"Uncle can't be your dadbut I can love you as much as your dad. So don't be lonely. Ella. Me, and the others, we are all by your side. And we all love you very much. You know that, right?"

Ella did not respond. Instead, she clenched on to Minjun's neck even tighter.

What was going on? She was still the same light child from earlier, but Ellafelt really heavy at that moment.

Chapter 194: In Front of the Start Line (1)

As usual, time did not care for anybody's situation. The opening date for Rose Island was already less than a month away. Of course, there were no customers yet, but the kitchen atmosphere seemed to be a bit more nervous than before.

And now, Jo Minjun was frowning while holding an orange in the middle of the market.

"This isn't good quality, is it? It seems like it would be lower in sweetness as well."

"Why wouldn't the quality be good Yes, it was a bit less sweet than usual."

"Are you going to be like this? If you keep doing this, I'm going to Trudy ajumma's store."

"Ah, don't be like that. It is not that big of a difference. It is still quite sweet. There is just a slight difference."

"That slight difference can control everything in cooking. So where are the good quality ones? Do you not have any?"

"Sorry. I think the deliverers did not keep the temperature right during the transport."

The man sighed with an embarrassed expression. He then peeked toward Jo Minjun. On the outside, it was difficult for even him, someone who had been selling fruits for almost forever, to tell the difference, but how could he tell without even tasting ithe could only click his tongue. Jo Minjun crossed his arms and sighed.

"Then why would you accept that shipment. You should have just sent it back. I guess today is no good. I will be back tomorrow."

"No, don't be like that. At least take a look at the other things."

"I don't plan on buying small amounts. The card is not my card."

JO Minjun left the disappointed man behind and turned around.

Maya and Justin just followed behind him and started to speak.

“Wow, chef. You’re amazing. How can you tell the sweetness without even tasting it?”

“I wish I can be like you in the future is there a know-how for it?”

“Color and smell. The texture as well.”

Of course, the system was slightly involved as well, but Maya and Justin’s noses were high up with arrogance and pride. It made sense. Of the four demi chefs, they could clearly say that Jo Minjun was the best, at least when it came to purchasing ingredients. There was never a time that Minjun bought bad ingredients. If you buy ten onions, there was a good chance at least one of them would be bad, but Jo Minjun verified each and every one of them.

It even led to the kitchen team asking if Jo Minjun should just be in charge of the ingredient shopping. Of course, there was no way Jo Minjun would accept it. It was not easy to wake up early in the morning to shop for ingredients.

But even though it was not easy, Maya and Justin actually looked forward to this time the most. The early morning air. The fragrance of multiple fruits in the air and all of the different colors of the ingredients were more beautiful than even a field of flowers. But these were not the reason they looked forward to it. Of course, these things all helped to calm and clear their mind, but the real fun was elsewhere. That fun was ...

“Look over there. The chefs from Pesto Pesto. After Chef Minjun said no to the oranges, they aren’t buying it either.”

“The chefs from Glacier are just following behind us. They are trying to figure out what we don’t buy.”

This was it. Of course, they didn’t follow Jo Minjun around if the Head Chef or Sous Chef personally came out. But when the demi chefs or lower came out to run the errands, following Jo Minjun

was a way to avoid the mines and only find the good ingredients. You could call it an ingredient shopping guide of some sort.

It made sense. Jo Minjun was like a famous celebrity around the market merchants right now. It was not because he had an absolute taste nor because he was a chef at Rose Island. After being able to tell apart the condition of ingredients that even merchants who have been working for tens of years could not do, how could he not be famous?

It was like he became an elite of the chef world. Of course just working at Rose Island was enough to call him an elite, but Jo Minjun's calm demeanor and knowledge not filling his age allowed those around him to have a sense of pride. Almost to the point that they felt like they had to even walk in a stylish fashion.

As usual, Justin was driving on their way back from the market. He started to speak in an excited voice.

"It is always easy and fun when we go shopping with you, chef. It feels like I am walking around with a celebrity."

"How can a chef find the market to be difficult? Doesn't it feel like you are at an amusement park? Whenever I see a lot of high quality and interesting ingredients, I feel like I am on a vacation."

"But unlike the demi chefs and prep cooks who take turns, I have to come every day. No matter how good something is, you'll get tired of it if you eat it every day."

"Keep it up. It will become easier once you get rid of the apprentice title."

Jo Minjun sent him a warm gaze as if he understood what Justin was going through. He himself had been an apprentice and an apprentice for a terrible and twisted individual at that. That was why he understood what Justin was going through. If the Head Chef was the busiest person mentally, the apprentice was the busiest person physically. They were in charge of all sorts of scut

work.

Maya started to think while looking at the way Minjun treated Justin. Although it might be the molecular gastronomy section, it might actually be really good that she ended up as Jo Minjun's assistant. He was gentle but not a pushover, stern, but not difficult. His focus was always on cooking, and he did not try to teach her in any area other than cooking.

Most importantly, he did not treat the people around him terribly. Of course, the other demi chefs were not much different, but you could clearly tell that Jo Minjun cared about the other person's situation a lot. It was to the point that if she even tried to complain, the other prep cooks would stop her saying 'at least you are Chef Minjun's assistant.'

They had to immediately get to work once they returned to the kitchen. Many people only think about the machine related tasks when they think about molecular gastronomy, but in Maya's opinion, there was more time spent dealing with special ingredients. Agar. Dextrose monohydrate. Lecithin. Tapioca maltodextrin and sodium citrate. Ingredients like that.

Which also meant that there was a lot of time spent checking the state of the doughs or gels made from using those ingredients as well. Of course, that alone did not make it extremely busy. But it was a busy job for both the hands and the mind to take those prepared ingredients out and cook with it. If it was already this difficult, just imagine what it would be like once they actually opened.

If there was anything the prep cooks learned while preparing for the opening was that there was a reason for the difference between demi chefs and prep cooks. It was not just the difference in their cooking abilities. Although the demi chefs got tired as well, they would never break their concentration while in the middle of cooking a dish. You could clearly see them putting their full attention on the dish. The prep cooks couldn't help but become

motivated while watching the demi chefs concentrate.

“Maya. Have a taste of this.”

Jo Minjun held a dish in front of Maya. Maya looked into the dish and saw a transparent noodle with white powder on it. After that, coriander and lemongrass were on top of it.

Maya started to speak.

“What is this?”

“It is a Thai-style rice noodle with calf broth that was creamed. After that, it was turned back into powder and simmered. Of course, it is not completed yet but at least tell me what you think of the taste.”

“.....It would be my honor.”

She seemed quite concerned for calling it an honor. It made sense. Jo Minjun’s molecular gastronomy dishes were quite... interesting. Almost amazing. Which meant.....

‘You don’t know whether you will be going to heaven or hell.’

Maya closed her eyes tightly and put the noodle in her mouth. The instant she took a bite, her closed eyes slowly opened back and her face was full of admiration. Maya chewed the noodles before swallowing it and clapping her hands.

“Wow. This is actually pretty decent. It is the best of the things you’ve made these days”

“Really?”

“But if there was something disappointing about it ...the flavor of the broth powder does not seem to be that deep.”

Jo Minjun heavily nodded his head. The thing that interested Jo Minjun lately was broth. There was quite a difference between Western and Eastern cuisine in broths as well. While Eastern nations tended to drink broths as they were, the Western cuisine used it more as an ingredient for soup or demi-glace sauce.

The problem was that both were really difficult and took a lot of care. Demi-glace sauce and broths, they both can feel like very basic ingredients.....but it was not easy to make it correctly. If you took a look at the Korean broth and rice restaurants, there are quite a few of them giving their entire life to create the proper broth taste.

‘.....I do have a recipe, but.’

There were quite a few decent broth and rice restaurants that he had visited throughout Koreatown. And Jo Minjun knew all of their broth recipes. The problem was that most broth and rice restaurants boiled large amounts of beef at once. In addition, they also had someone by the fire 24/7 to make sure the fire does not go out.

“Is this what you’ve been putting your heart into these days?”

A voice suddenly popped up. It was Rafael. He lifted up a fork and rolled up the noodle before putting it in his mouth.

He then nodded his head and started to speak.

“It tastes good, but the depth is not there.”

“I think it is because I wasn’t able to let the broth take as much time as it needs.”

“Did you use a commercial broth?”

“No, I made it myself. I thought handmade would definitely be better.”

“I’m not sure. I think with this much depth, it would be better to use commercial broths. You can’t look down on them because they are sold commercially. Products coming from a factory may all seem pretty similar, but there are quite a few that have the creator’s sincerity in them.”

“Yes. I know. HoweverI feel like the customers coming here would prefer things that we created by hand.”

“That is true. Then why don’t you try making it yourself? I will allow it.”

Once Rafael said that, Jo Minjun looked at Rafael in confusion. Rafael smiled before continuing to speak.

“That broth. Make it with your own hands.”

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“.....I was wondering why I couldn’t see you, but are you really doing this crazy thing?”

Kaya looked at Minjun with eyes that seemed to be calling him an idiot. It was night time. There were only three people in the kitchen. Jo Minjun. Kaya. And Anderson. Jo Minjun smiled coolly as he answered.

“To be honest, I wanted to try it at least once. Slow food. I have never personally made it with my hands before.”

“But there is still a limit to it. People don’t just get on a spaceship because they want to go to space.”

“Ay, you can’t compare this to that.”

“.....You really are helpless. Really.”

Kaya sat down on a counter. Anderson started to frown.

“That’s my countertop.”

“Oh. Sorry my butt. I put something weird on you.”

Kaya jumped off and patted her butt off. Jo Minjun let out a sigh.

“If you’re just going to do that, leave. It’s already late.”

“You may say that, but you’ll be lonely if I leave.”

“Is there a person who gets lonely while cooking?”

Jo Minjun casually answered as he skimmed off the fat that was rising up to the top of the broth. Kaya poked her head out from next to Jo Minjun’s neck.

“The smell of pork is going to become seeped into the kitchen. How long do you need to boil this for?”

“24 hours.”

“.....You’re just going to stay like this for the whole time? You’ll hurt yourself.”

“It’s okay if I take a couple minute break every so often.”

“All this suffering just to make a fancy ramen soup.”

“.....I’m suddenly getting tired hearing you put it like that.”

He let out a laugh. While Kaya was massaging Minjun’s neck, Anderson started to speak.

“Cooking is one thing, but we need to sign the contract for our house soon.”

“Did you two decide?”

Jo Minjun did not take his eyes off the broth as he asked. There were two contenders for where they would live. One was in Beverly Hills, the other was in West Hollywood. The former was close to Rose Island while the latter was close to Kaya’s Grand Chef restaurant. Of course, neither was that much further than the other.

Kaya answered.

“I like Beverly Hills.”

“Why?”

“There are too many crazies in Hollywood.”

Minjun could understand what Kaya was trying to say. All sorts of artists gathered into Hollywood to the point that the people on the Hollywood side tended to be quite...odd. Anderson started to speak.

“But the Beverly Hills side you already know, right? All it has is a master bedroom and a second bedroom.”

“We know.”

The cost of housing on the Beverly Hills side was quite expensive. It was difficult to find a three bedroom with their salaries. This meant that at least two of the three of them would need to share the master bedroom. Anderson shrugged his shoulders and continued.

“Then we just have one thing left. The master bedroom. Who will use it? The two of you? Or Minjun and I?”

Chapter 195: In Front of the Start Line (2)

“Is that even necessary to ask?”

Kaya looked toward Anderson in disbelief. Anderson sneered right back.

“What? Is the answer that certain?”

“Of course. I think.....”

“Hold on. Stop right there.”

Anderson lifted up his hand. He then looked toward Jo Minjun who was in front of the pot.

“Both of you answer at the same time. Say out loud who you think the person to share the room with Minjun is. Kaya, that answer you are so certain about, let’s see if your precious boyfriend thinks the same way.”

“.....You think Minjun’s going to answer differently?”

“Not sure. People’s thoughts are more likely to be different than the same though.”

Kaya started to glare at Anderson. Anderson just started to smirk as if he was mocking her. His casual tone was irritating for Kaya.

“Should we bet on it? You can give up if you are not confident.”

“I am absolutely confident. Bring it on.”

“Fine, what do you want to bet?”

Kaya thought about it for a moment before speaking in a confident voice.

“Dishes. No. Dishes, trash, and cleaning. All of it. How about it?”

“For how long?”

“As long as we live together.”

Although you couldn’t tell what was making Kaya so confident,

she was glaring at Anderson with a competitive gaze. But unfortunately, Jo Minjun could not even fathom what answer Kaya was going to give. Will she say that it was only right for the two of them to share a room because they are dating? But at this point, they two of them haven't even slept on the same bed together.

At the same time, it wasn't like she was going to say it was natural for him to share the room with Anderson. No matter what, the two of them were dating. If you are living with your girlfriend and a friend, wouldn't it be weird to share the room with your friend instead of your girlfriend?

Jo Minjun's head was spinning fast, almost to the point that he felt like he had never thought this hard in his life before. Even coming up with a new recipe would not be this difficult. Anderson started to speak.

"I will count to three. Both of you answer at the same time. If I am sharing a room with Minjun, the fork, and if you two are using a room together, the spoon. Understand?"

"Yes. Count."

Kaya gulped. Anderson also clenched his fist with a nervous expression. Truthfully speaking, this came down to luck. Whose side would God choose to take? After a moment of silence, Anderson started to count.

".....Three. Two. One!"

"Spoon!" "Fork!"

The two voices were not the same. Jo Minjun and Kaya looked toward each other. Kaya was glaring at Minjun grudgingly as if she was asking how he could do that to her. Jo Minjun had shouted fork, while Kaya shouted spoon. Jo Minjun did not dare to make eye contact with Kaya and turned his gaze away.

"Unbelievable. What is this Minjun? How does this make

sense? You really like that beanpole that much?”

“No, that not I never expected you would want to share rooms with me.”

“Isn’t it obvious? Are we just friends? We are a couple! Isn’t it weirder to use different rooms?”

“Ah, I need to get rid of the foam in the pot.”

“Are you really thinking about that right now?”

Jo Minjun pretended like he didn’t hear as he focused on getting rid of the foam that was rising to the top of the broth. Anderson snickered before looking toward Kaya with a cold smile.

“Thank you very much. Dishes, cleaning, and even the trash. Amazing. Wonderful.”

“.....Are you really planning on making me do it?”

“Then should I ask as a joke? You’re not planning on taking back a promise you decided on yourself, are you? Well, I guess that is up to you. Don’t do it if you don’t want to. I won’t point out how you went back on your word.”

“Don’t say that I went back on my word even before it started. I’m good at fighting, you know.”

“Oh wow. So amazing. Well if you don’t plan on going back against your word, that’s good too. I leave it to you, miss housekeeper.”

Kaya lifted up her fists. Anderson casually turned around and walked away.

“I’m leaving first. I’m too sleepy to stay up.”

“Traitor. You’re going to leave alone?”

“I never told him to boil a broth. He decided to do it himself.”

Anderson gave that answer before heading out of the kitchen. Kaya started to pout as she pulled over a chair and sat down.

“That petty bastard. Even his future wife will be just as petty.”

“Wasn’t he doing it for us? Giving us some alone time with each other.”

“Ha! If someone was going to give alone time, shouldn’t it be me? Our classy and formal Mr. Minjun Jo prefers to share a room with not his girlfriend, but Anderson.”

“.....Why are you being like this? You know that’s not it.”

“I don’t know.”

Kaya put her arms on the back of the chair and put her head down. She then started to mumble in a sad voice. Dishes, cleaning, trash Jo Minjun could not bear it and let out a sigh before responding.

“I’ll help you. So don’t worry about it.”

“Don’t help me. I lost. It is my responsibility.”

“Whatever you want.”

Jo Minjun did not hesitate even a little bit before answering back. Kaya started to glare at Jo Minjun’s back. Jo Minjun did not even look back as he started to speak once more.

“Why say that if you’re going to glare at me like this?”

“Huh? What. How do you know I was glaring?”

“Do you think I don’t know Kaya Lotus?”

“You didn’t know what decision I would make.”

“To not not know does not mean I know.”

Jo Minjun responded naturally. Kaya started to grumble.

“Always so good with words for no reason.”

“There are so many people who are not good with words. A chef is half successful if they have a way with words.”

Kaya just quietly looked at Jo Minjun’s back as he said that. He

was not cooking something amazing. He was just boiling a broth and carefully getting rid of the foam. But for some reason, he looked really cool while doing that. He looked lovely. And she was envious. Kaya slowly started to speak.

“How much do you think I have succeeded. As a chef.”

“.....We say success, but neither of us are at the level to discuss our journey as successful, yet.”

“You know what I am talking about. But I feel like I am being left behind. All of you are working in a kitchen while I spend more time standing in the hall. I just show my face to people, take pictures with them, and sign autographs. I also have to receive compliments for recipes I barely had a role in making.

.....I feel like a con artist.”

Jo Minjun’s hands stopped moving. But he did not look back. If he wanted to, he could go over and hug her to console her. But he did not do that. He could not do that. That would be like going up to someone with a cold and saying ‘you’re not really sick.’ Even if it was difficulthe had to be the one to give the shot. If necessary, he had to cut off the rotting limb. Jo Minjun started to speak. His mind was holding a scalpel.

“Kaya. What is frustrating? The fact that you cannot stand in a kitchen? Or that you have to live as Grand Chef’s puppet for a year?”

“Both.”

“Why is it frustrating?”

“I already told you. I am neither a chef nor a celebrity right now. Just awkwardly in the middle. It would be one thing if I took a step into the entertainment world like Chloe. I really am nothing right now. No, I am just not doing anything right now. I really hate this.”

Jo Minjun quietly lifted up his ladle. He slowly threw away the

foam on the ladle into the trash can. He then slowly started to speak.

“Kaya. You are a better chef than you give yourself credit for. You said your recipe was not perfect just now. That is why they have to change it. I’m sure your abilities as a head chef is lacking as well. It is only normal for it to be lacking. Then what do you think you should be doing right now?”

“.....What do you mean by what I should be doing?”

“What you want to do in the end is to cook. Then train your skills. Fix up recipes, research them, and work hard to not just be a head chef in name, but a real head chef. Make the kitchen yours. Even if you don’t manage to successfully do thatall your effort to make it happen will show matching results. Are you giving your best right now?”

Kaya did not answer. She could not answer. As Jo Minjun mentioned, Kaya had not clenched her teeth and done whatever she could to make it happen. Jo Minjun continued to speak.

“You cannot win the championship belt if you do not challenge the champion. Kaya, if you want to grumble, do it after you make a challenge. Cry after you’ve taken a beating from the champion. At that time, I will console you properly. But not right now. Kaya. I don’t like those tears that come even before you’ve tried to fight.”

“.....I didn’t cry.”

“Yes. You shouldn’t cry.”

Kaya got up from the chair and hugged Jo Minjun from behind. Her arms that passed underneath his armpits clenched his chest tightly. Kaya whispered in a quiet voice.

“You’re so mean. Always so stern with me.”

“So stop acting like a child.”

“I am still a kid. I’m still in my teens.”

“.....I guess I have nothing to say to that.”

Jo Minjun put down the ladle and turned around. He then kissed Kaya on the lips and started to smile.

“Don’t you think I would have done well as a teacher?”

Kaya started to laugh.

“I think you would have eventually given it up to be a chef.”

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Her body was heavy. She could not be sure whether she was breathing, or if she could even move any of her fingers. She felt like she opened her eyes for a moment, but her eyelids were so heavy and closing back down. Once she came back to her senses, the world was once again covered in darkness.

Once she managed to get out of this sleep or paralysis world, the first thing in front of Kaya’s eyes was a round face. Ella was looking at Kaya right in front of her. Kaya rubbed her eyes as she started to stretch.

“Yaaaaawn.....Ella. Why are you heah?”

Her voice that was still half asleep and did not come out correctly just slowly came out of her mouth. Ella let out a humph as she flipped her hair back. On her chest was the Chloe doll that Chloe had signed for her.

“Because kindergarten already ended!”

“Kindergarten?Why is it over so early? It’s still morning.”

“It’s not morning. It’s mourning. No, morning.”

Ella, who said the wrong word, quickly fixed herself. But Kaya did not have the luxury of thinking Ella was cute or even stupid. She had a blank expression as she tried to absorb what Ella just said, before quickly taking her smartphone out of her pocket. However, the screen did not turn on. It was out of battery. Kaya looked at Ella with a nervous expression.

“Ella. Do you have a phone?”

“What kind of kindergartener has a phone?”

“Then what about a watch?”

“I don’t know. But it’s already past two.”

Of course, Ella was not talking about 2 am. Kaya put her hand on her forehead and let out a sigh. She was late. Since she was already so late, she did not even think about rushing. Jo Minjun’s message about challenging to do her best was still ringing in her head, but she had done something like this from the first day.

Kaya slowly lifted her body up with a weary expression. It really was too much to pull an all-nighter. She had put her head on the table to take a short nap, so how did she wake up on the couch? Did Jo Minjun lay her down? Kaya looked toward Ella.

“What is Minjun doing?”

“Cooking.”

“.....Still?”

Kaya had a concerned expression. She was this tired after taking a short, no, a quite long nap, so how must he be feeling? She held no grudges at the fact that he did not wake her up. It was her responsibility to wake herself up.

Once she stepped out of the office where she was laying down, the sweet fragrance of the broth hit her nose. Surprisingly, it did not smell greasy at all. It might be normal because Minjun spent so much effort getting rid of the oil and the foambut she was even more worried, knowing how tired his body must be to put in all of that effort.

“Ah, hello, Chef Kaya.”

“Yes, hello.”

Kaya responded back to the prep cooks’ greetings with a still stiff expression as she immediately headed for the hall. Jo Minjun was

there. He started to smile with his tired face once he saw Kaya.

“Oh, Kaya. You’re up?”

“.....Did you not sleep at all?”

“Don’t worry. This much is easy. Ah, I already contacted your agent-nim. I told them you are not feeling well so you needed to rest.”

“Am I really the sick one? You look like you’re about to fall over.”

Kaya’s voice sounded a bit angry. Watching Kaya, Rafael whispered in Janet’s ear.

“She is just as rumored. Minjun is really going to be whipped.”

“I don’t know. I have a feeling it would be the opposite.”

“The opposite?”

Instead of answering, Janet just looked back toward Kaya and Jo Minjun. Rafael turned to look at them as well. Jo Minjun smiled gently as he sat Kaya down next to him.

“You can be angry later, but first, try this. It shouldn’t be too much even on an empty stomach. I solidified the broth and put boiled beef wrapped in a lasagna inside. The flavoring was done with nutmeg powder and a bit of rock salt. Hurry, try it.”

Seeing his eyes glitter with expectation for her to try it, she could not just continue to grumble. Kaya opened her mouth and ate the food Minjun offered. It really was an interesting taste. To be specific, the interesting thing was the texture. It looked like a firm ball, but it felt very different than jelly. It is probably best described as water that was somehow retaining its shape. The broth gently melted in your mouth, and the chewiness of the beef wrapped in lasagna added texture and savoriness.

But the strongest flavor was, of course, the broth. How could it be like this just because time and effort were put into it? The Asian flavor melted with the lasagna and beef, bringing out the most of

each ingredient. Kaya even forgot about her concerns for Minjun as she showed her admiration.

“This could probably go out as a menu item. Of course, it does require some more adjustmentsbut it is really good.”

“It’ll be difficult to make it a menu item. I can’t make a broth like this every day.”

“.....I guess that is true. Then why did you make this if you can’t even put it on the menu?”

Jo Minjun quietly chuckled instead of responding. Kaya started to frown.

“Why are you laughing?”

“No, it’s funny. Just yesterday, you were saying I was putting effort into something useless, but now, you’re disappointed that I can’t put it on the menu. Isn’t it funny? The fact that you put time and effort into something is so clearly visible.”

Kaya quietly processed Minjun’s words. Was it because they talked so much yesterday? His words did not feel so light. Maybe that was why, but her answer was heavier than normal.

“I hope our relationship, that we can put that much effort into it and boil it for a long time.”

Jo Minjun held Kaya’s hand.

“We will boil it until the marrows run out and the bones break down.”

Chapter 196: In Front of the Start Line (3)

‘.....They’re at it again.’

The kitchen family all shook their heads and let out sighs. It was really romantic, but how could he say something so cheesy in front of everybody? It wouldn’t feel this gross if they were just showing some intense public display of affection.

Maya looked toward Gerrick. She started to speak in a disturbed tone.

“Hey, Gerrick. Are all Asian men like this?”

“.....I don’t know. But Korean men are famous for being the cheesiest even amongst the Asians.”

“But it will change once they get married, right?”

“That shouldn’t be different for any nationality. Even the melo movies only focus on life before marriage. They don’t usually focus on life after marriage. They can’t do it because romance dies once you get married. Once you get married, it becomes a family drama. Family dramas focus more on crisis, arguments, apologies and things like that.”

Janet started to speak in a cold voice after hearing Gerrick’s statement.

“I really want those to get married quickly.”

“.....That sounds like a wish filled with evil intentions.”

Gerrick awkwardly laughed as he said that. But Janet did not seem to be laughing. Anderson who was standing next to her started to speak with a serious expression.

“That is the best thing you’ve ever said until now.”

“I always say good things.”

“Whatever you say.”

Anderson shrugged his shoulders. Janet peeked at Anderson for a moment before turning her gaze away. She then flinched. Ella was glaring her with eyes full of resentment. She then started to mumble in a teary voice.

“.....I don’t want to see that happen.”

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“This is the last of your stuff, right?”

“There isn’t much. Just a few clothes.”

Jo Minjun put his last suitcase onto the car as he shrugged his shoulders. California generally had warm weather, so other than a few formal suits or thin coats, the majority were summer clothes.

He looked behind him. The sun was warmly shining down on the house. The dents on the bright magenta fence gave away its age, and the long chimney on one side of the wall looked like it was coming loose. Jo Minjun started to mumble in a sad voice.

“.....It is a bit sad now that I am leaving.”

“It would be weird if you weren’t sad leaving such a nice house like this.”

“Your house is nice too. But why aren’t you sad?”

“Who cares if the house is nice? There are two ghosts living there.”

“Calling your parents ghosts is a bit much.”

“You try dealing with them then. Even you’ll say they are too much. Your parents are nice. You wouldn’t understand.”

Jo Minjun silently raised his eyebrows before lowering them back down. It wasn’t like Anderson was wrong. Jo Minjun parents were certainly very different than Anderson’s parents. But

“But Amelia looked to be tearing up when you were packing earlier.”

“.....Tears my ass.”

Anderson responded with a bitter expression. Rachel, who had been watching the two of them, slowly started to speak.

“Amelia acts tough but she’s tough internally.”

“.....I don’t understand your statement. Shouldn’t it be acts tough but is weak on the inside?”

“Even strong women like her will find it difficult when her child leaves. Especially when its a son she’s held close to her for over twenty years.”

“She’s not the type to hug like that.....”

Anderson started to retort before Rachel’s glare made him stop. Jo Minjun started to think while watching Rachel. Did Rachel and Daniel never have any children or did they lose them? Normally, you are likely to have a child or two after being together that long, but he could only wonder about it as nobody ever mentioned the topic.

Of course, he was not rude enough to ask her himself. Just because he was curious did not mean he had the right to know about it. It was her personal life. Unless she brought it up first, he did not have a reason to, or a right to ask. Rachel had a sorrowful smile on her face as she turned to look at Jo Minjun.

“Guess you are leaving now.”

“I enjoyed my time here. I’ve never eaten such good food at home ever in my life.”

“My my. Kaya will be sad if you say something like that.”

“I don’t think Kaya’s ever cooked for me at home just yet.”

“Won’t she eventually?”

It was a mischievous question. Jo Minjun embarrassingly turned his gaze. Rachel continued to speak in a slightly serious voice.

“Sometimes, there are times when you have to firmly grasp onto something instead of backing away. You may take it as an old hag nagging at you, but that is what women want from a man. They want someone to hold them tightly.”

“.....Teacher, were you like that too?”

“Although I have heard many times that I have a strong personality, I am still not a man. While men may want the world, women want a man who has the world. And when they are sure that they have someone like that, it is time for that person to focus on them. A woman who does not receive such loveit becomes easy to question the love itself.”

He could understand what Rachel was saying. Jo Minjun had contemplative eyes as he nodded his head. He then cautiously started to speak.

“But haven’t I focused on her a lot already?”

“It is a very gentle focus. Sometimes, it is good to be a bit forceful. Think about it. If you made a friend but they were always formal with you, would you be comfortable around that friend?”

“.....I guess it would be a bit hard.”

Jo Minjun answered in a not so confident voice. Rachel started to smile. She then slowly patted Jo Minjun’s shoulder as she continued.

“You are a smart kid. I know you understood what I was trying to say. I’ll end my nagging there. You don’t think I’m a boring granny do you?”

“Teacher, I wouldn’t find it boring even if you were reading an encyclopedia in front of me.”

“You are very obviously trying to flatter me.”

“Isn’t such obvious flattery cuter than hidden flattery?”

“.....I really can’t decide whether you are a bear or a fox. I keep

going back and forth.”

Rachel started to smile thinking there was nothing she could do about this troublemaker. Jo Minjun responded in a gentle voice.

“Thank you very much, teacher.It feels odd to say something like this. It’s not like I’m leaving the kitchen. I’m just leaving the house.”

“Come here.”

Rachel opened up her arms. Jo Minjun cautiously approached her and hugged her. Rachel patted Minjun’s back again.

“You were like a son to me. You will continue to be like a son to me. If you are ever missing your family, feel free to come by anytime.”

Jo Minjun had a thought pop into his head once he heard that. He had family in Korea and a girlfriend in Kaya. But Rachel did not have anybody left.

Of course, the loyal Isaac was by her side, butit started to weigh on his heart that the person longing for a family was more likely to be Rachel than himself.

Jo Minjun hugged Rachel tighter. It was not just strength in those arms that were hugging her. There was the apologetic feeling for leaving, and a type of love. Could Rachel feel it as well? He could not tell. Jo Minjun quietly whispered to her.

“Don’t think of me as a kid who is like a son. Just treat me as your son. When you hug me, I’m going to hug you back.”

“.....You sure know what to say. Are you trying to console me?”

“Consoling isn’t only done by the higher ranking person.”

Rachel lightly pushed Jo Minjun away. Her wrinkled face had a slightly nervous look. Rachel let out a fake cough as she started to speak.

“Go now. You even took some vacation time to move, you can’t

waste it all chatting with me.”

“Vacation time is not enough in return for chatting with you, teacher.”

“I really can’t do anything about that smooth tongue of yours.”

Rachel smile seemed to say there wasn’t anything she could do about him. For someone to say such cheesy lines so casually, and so honestly without any hidden ambitionsit was no wonder Kaya fell for such a person. No, regardless of male or female, his honest personality was something anybody would be curious about.

‘It is a good thing to have.’

It was possible to make good food without having a good personality. Even if a dish carries a chef’s feelings, there were not many people who could read the feelings in a dish.

But in the end, a kitchen run by such a person will run into issues. If you don’t take care of a cavity because it doesn’t hurt, eventually, you will have to pull out the tooth because the damage will exponentially get worse. At least Jo Minjun will not ever fall into a situation like that. No, not only will he not have any issues, his character alone will get him many benefits. His warm personality will embrace his kitchen family, and a kitchen like that will embrace the customers even tighter.

“I will let you know as soon as we arrive!”

“It’s not even that far. Just go and get settled in before getting a good rest. That’s an order from your head chef.”

“Yes.”

Jo Minjun saluted before getting into the car. Rachel, who was smiling as she watched the car drive away, slowly turned around. It was full of voices just a moment ago, but it was completely quiet now.

The wind, chirping of birds and insects, and even car engines

could not be heard. Rachel blankly stared at her house. Why did this house that seemed to come out of a fairytale feel so far away?”

“.....It’s going to be much quieter around her now.”

She could not get herself to start walking.

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The house that the three of them were moving to was on the outskirts of Beverly Hills. Many tall trees were planted around the street, and many cars were parked on the street in front of the house.

And one of those vehicles were Jo Minjun and Anderson’s truck. When Jo Minjun dragged his suitcase into the house, Kaya who had been dusting the house looked toward them with her mask still on her face.

“Did you get all your stuff?”

“Yes, this is it.”

“Nice and simple.

Kaya nodded her head. The furniture they had ordered in advance was already delivered and waiting for them. Jo Minjun let out a sigh before plopping down on the couch. Kaya started to frown.

“You’re going to rest as soon as you arrived? Do you know how many things we have to do right now?”

“Isn’t the cleaning your responsibility?”

“.....So you’re not going to cooperate, is that it?”

Kaya sharply glared at Jo Minjun. Jo Minjun grabbed Kaya’s wrist that was holding the duster and pulled her in close.

Kaya was surprised and kind of fell on top of Minjun’s knees as she turned around and continued to glare.

“What are you trying to do?”

“Let’s rest a bit. My mind is a bit loud right now.”

“.....Did something happen?”

Jo Minjun tightly hugged Kaya instead of answering. Kaya started to squirm as if she was uncomfortable.

“If you’re going to hug me, hug me properly. This position hurts my back too much.”

“Teacher Rachel told me that sometimes, I need to act like a bad man.”

“.....I don’t think this is what she meant by that.”

Jo Minjun smirked as he let Kaya go. Kaya got up and fixed herself before her eyes instantly looked toward Minjun’s lap and the empty seat next to him.

In the end, her decision was half and half. Half of her butt was on the couch while the other half was on top of Minjun’s thigh. Jo Minjun asked in disbelief.

“You told me to hug you properly if I’m going to hug you, but you can’t even sit properly.”

“I read it on the internet. If you want to maintain a successful relationship, don’t give them your whole heart and body. Just give them half. That’s why...why is your face like that?”

“I was just thinking about Teacher Rachel. Thinking about her living in that large house on her ownis making me a bit sad.”

“You can visit her often. Plus, you will be working in the same kitchen.”

“But the house is different. She needs someone to welcome her when she gets home.....”

“Doesn’t she have Isaac?”

“The two of them don’t feel like familyit feels more like a master and servant type of relationship. I don’t know.”

“Stop thinking about things you can’t answer and come inside. I finished cleaning our room.”

Kaya kissed Jo Minjun’s cheek as she stood up. In the end, Kaya and Jo Minjun were going to share the master bedroom. Even if he didn’t show it visually, Jo Minjun also preferred to share the room with Kaya than Anderson. As long as Kaya didn’t mind, there was no reason to use different rooms.

But they were not going to share a bed. To be specific, there were two beds in the room with just enough distance for a lamp to fit in between. Kaya laid down on the bed before looking toward Minjun.

“What are you doing. You lay down too.”

“Right now?”

“Then are you going to lay down tomorrow?”

Jo Minjun contemplated for a moment. He was still wearing his outside clothes [1]. But rather than giving an excuse and getting Kaya angry, it would be better to just wash his blanket properly later.

Once he laid down, Kaya started to speak.

“Hand.”

“.....Am I a dog?”

Even though Jo Minjun said that he still gave her his hand. Kaya held onto his hand as she started to laugh with a satisfied expression.

“We’re going to sleep like this every day.”

“.....There will be no progress if we do this every day.”

“Even if we progress in our relationship, we will hold our hands like this when we sleep. Not just when we’re sleeping. Wherever we go, whatever we do, let’s do it while holding hands.”

“Even when going to the restroom?”

“Stop ruining the moment.”

Kaya glared and pinched Minjun’s palm. It did not hurt. Jo Minjun started to speak.

“Do you remember our promise back during Grand Chef?”

“Which promise?”

“Breakfast and lunch. I said I will make it for you until you lost in the competition.”

Jo Minjun was still laying down as he turned his head over. Kaya was already looking at him. Once their gazes met, he continued to speak.

“But you ended up winning. Losing is no longer possible.”

Kaya did not respond. Jo Minjun seriously gazed into Kaya’s eyes. Then he started to whisper as if he was joking.

“This hand that you are holding, you can’t ever take it back.”

End

Chapter 197: The Courtship of 36 People (1)

When marriage and cohabitation was romanticized, they often have one thing in common. Waking up in the morning to the chirping birds and the sunlight reaching in through the window. As you scrunch up your face in sleepiness and open your eyes, you see the beautiful face of your gently sleeping partner right in front of your eyes.

And Kaya was currently in the middle of that romanticized moment. It was early morning. The fog had not lifted yet, so the sunlight was not that bright. The birds were not chirping yet either. The only thing present was this sleepiness that was making her feel heavy, and the side view of Jo Minjun she could barely make out with her heavy eyelids. He was just about two arm's length away from her.

‘.....So sleepy.’

To close her eyes in sleepiness or to continue staring at Jo Minjun's face. After contemplating this difficult decision for a while, her eyelids started to shake before they closed. After being frozen by sleep for a slight moment, Kaya took another deep breath as she cautiously reached over to the nightstand next to her. She picked up her smartphone.

6:57 am. Her alarm was set for 7 am. In the beginning, she would turn her alarm off and go back to bed, should she be happy that she could now get herself to barely wake up before the alarm even rings?

She debated just staying still until the alarm went off, but in the end, Kaya turned off her alarm and got up. She did not want to bother Jo Minjun's sleep. Kaya approached Jo Minjun's bed and kneeled, reaching her head over like a cat and looking down at Jo Minjun's face. A smile started to form on that tired face of hers.

“He's sleeping so peacefully.”

Some people have weird expressions on their faces as they sleep, but Jo Minjun was sleeping in the same calm and gentle manner as his usual self. Even the blanket on him was not in a mess. He really was a uselessly perfect boyfriend. But maybe that was the reason she liked him even more.

Kaya reached a finger over and poked Jo Minjun's cheek. She really liked the feeling of his firm and elastic cheek. She would probably touch it all day if she could.

But she did not have that much time. Kaya kissed Jo Minjun on the lips and got up. It was time to get ready for work as usual.

Kaya's day started with preparing breakfast. Kaya was also supposed to make lunch according to the two of their contract stipulations, but that was not realistically possible. The two of them could not be together during lunch. The only thing she could realistically do was to make breakfast, so Kaya put all her heart into making breakfast.

"Hmm. It fermented well."

Kaya opened the lid of the pot to look inside before nodding her head in satisfaction. Inside the pot was none other than doenjang jjigae. She had boiled it yesterday and let it cool to bring out even more flavor. Kaya put the pot on the stove and turned it on low, before starting to wash the rice.

She did not turn on the tap water even when she washed the rice. The taste of rice would be completely different depending on which water you used for the first rinse. Kaya used the slow flowing filtered water for all three rinses of the rice. It was a lot of work but she didn't mind. Her favorite thing was cooking, and her favorite person was Jo Minjun. Why would she not like doing something she likes for her precious person?

Other than doenjang jjigae and rice, the rest were dried side dishes that could be taken straight out. There was only one other thing she made on her own. But it was not an easy dish. Shrimp

bisque puree and steamed sea bass with shrimp. It felt a little Westernized for a Korean breakfast, but she didn't think the tastes would clash with each other.

“.....You're so loud even in the morning.”

She could hear someone clicking their tongue behind her. She didn't even need to turn around. Kaya responded in a rough voice.

“Don't eat it if you don't like it. I thought I might as well make some for you while I make it for Minjun, but you are kicking it away yourself.”

“I said you were loud, I never said I didn't like it.”

“Then shut up and wait. Don't get on my nerves.”

Kaya bluntly shot back. Anderson was upset, but Kaya was the one with the blade right now. He just sighed internally as he started to speak.

“You seem like you're almost done. Should I wake Minjun up?”

“No, let him sleep a few more minutes. And I will be the one to wake up him. I will kill you if you take that away from me. I mean it.”

There was nothing better than watching someone looking confused as they first wake up. A moment later, Kaya took off the apron as she started to speak.

“Set up the table. I'll go wake Minjun up.”

Jo Minjun was still sleeping even though it was almost 8 am. It made sense. Recently, there have been many days that Minjun was researching recipes until late at night. In addition he could probably relax now that he had his own house.

She felt bad about it, but she had to wake him up. Kaya kissed Minjun on the lips. She then did not let go until Minjun could not breathe. In the end, Minjun's body started to shake as he slowly lifted his head up.

“.....What are you doing?”

“I’m waking you up.”

“What an interesting alarm.”

Jo Minjun smiled and hugged Kaya. Kaya flailed around as she started to speak.

“No. You have to wake up. I made breakfast.”

“Okay. Just 1 minute. No, 1 minute 30 seconds.”

“You’re such a cheapskate even when it comes to extending time.”

Kaya looked at Minjun in disbelief before starting to laugh. Anderson looked toward them from the kitchen before facepalming. He left his parents house to stop their nagging, but these two were terrible roommates in a different manner.

Their affectionate actions did not end in the bedroom. Jo Minjun smiled brightly and let out his admiration as soon as he sat down.

“Wow! Doenjang jjigae and rice. It really feels like a Korean meal.”

“I’m sure you miss it in the morning. It would be great for you to start your mornings off in a familiar manner while living abroad. The people at our market were the same way. Some of them would even stay here illegally and not go back to their home country, but always wanted meals from home.”

“There are two things that separate countries. People, and food.”

“So make sure to look after yourself. Are you eating well for lunch at the restaurant? No, I’m sure you’re eating well right now. How do you think it will be once you open?”

“I’m sure I’ll still eat well at that time. Of course, apprentices might not have any time because they need to prep the ingredients and prepare things during the gap time, but I’m a demi-chef. Plus

Jo Minjun continued in a slightly bitter voice.

“Chef Rachel is extremely sensitive about the workers’ health. She had a bad experience in the kitchen. She probably doesn’t want to experience anything like that again.”

“I’m sure it would be terrible to experience something like that. So make sure you take care of yourself. Promise?”

“I should be telling you that. You seem to be a lot skinnier these days.”

“.....Hey. Can we please just shut up while we eat? Kaya, didn’t you say we should focus on eating last time?”

Anderson started to speak as if he was exhausted. Kaya lifted her eyes to glare as she responded.

“Just shut up if you’re getting food for free, you lazy bastard. You have a lot to say for someone who didn’t help at all. Furthermore, last time was an amazing dish that you needed to focus on. Honestly speaking, this isn’t at that level.”

“Why not? I like this more than that restaurant.”

Kaya started to smile at Jo Minjun’s words. Anderson shook his head.

“.....These lunatics.”

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Rose Island was busier than usual that day. It was not only because their newly hired servers and sommeliers were present. There were cameras all around the kitchen and hall, as well as cameramen with cameras the size of little children walking around.

They were doing a special on Rose Island. The beautifully decorated main branch that lived in the memories of the old folks, and the fantasies of the young. Being able to do a special on such a location was an attractive topic for the broadcast station. It was

also beneficial for Rose Island since filming was only scheduled until opening day. What problem will there be as long as they don't get in the way of their cooking?

But the cameramen and staff were caught up in an unexpected situation. The demi chefs and prep cooks headed toward the staff after cooking every dish and asked them to taste it. At first, they happily ate it, excited that they would get to eat such luxurious food for free, but this baptism of food did not stop. The PD next to Jo Minjun stuck out his tongue.

“You're already working this hard even though you haven't even opened?”

“It's been like this for a few months already. We can't test our teamwork on customers.”

“.....Then has our staff become your guinea pigs?”

Jo Minjun avoided the PD's eyes. The PD let out a chuckle before starting to speak again.

“I heard a bit about you from Martin. He said you become a completely different person when you cook.”

“It's not always the case. If it was, I would be crazy. Oh, did Martin perhaps call me crazy?”

The PD cautiously nodded his head. Seeing Jo Minjun let out a sigh, he quickly added on.

“Ah, but he didn't just say you were crazy, he said you were a lovable crazy.”

“What is different about it?”

“The fact that there is some affection.”

“.....I'm not sure. I don't think Martin's affection will help console the fact that he called me crazy.”

“He's right. You are crazy.”

Janet, who was heading for the fridge, casually said that as she walked by. Jo Minjun looked at Janet with a devastated expression before turning back around to make eye contact with the PD. The PD shrugged his shoulders.

“Seems like a pretty official title?”

“Please edit that out.”

Jo Minjun shortly answered before focusing back on his cooking. The PD looked at the focused Minjun, as well as the servers practicing their serving in the kitchen and hall. Both the kitchen and the hall seemed to be very well trained.

‘.....Did they say the menu changes every 15 days.’

The concept of Jo Minjun’s dish, putting air into mozzarella cheese to blow it up like a balloon, was quite fresh. To create a new menu like that every fifteen days any normal person would probably feel like their head was about to blow up.

‘But I guess this is Rachel Rose and Rose Island because something like that is possible.’

Even the extremely prideful famous restaurant chefs could not act that way in front of Rachel Rose. Is it because it is the kitchen of such person? Or is it because she picked only the best of the best? All of the demi chefs in the kitchen seemed to be extremely skilled.

There was nothing that got in the way of their cooking, and nothing that made them anxious. All of the dishes they made were works of art. Although they were pretty much making the same dishes over and over, that was actually harder than making different dishes. It was easy to get complacent while making the same thing over and over. Just the fact that they could maintain the same quality for every dish showed that they were already doing enough as demi chefs.

‘I heard Minjun has only been learning molecular gastronomy for

a couple of months.'

For only learning for a couple months, he seemed extremely familiar with using the syringe, liquid nitrogen, and agar. Was it easier to cook things that required visible precision? Although the PD was not an expert, he had met many expert chefs while working as a PD. He could tell that Jo Minjun's hand movements seemed just as natural as some of those experts.

'.....I remember Martin saying that as a PD, he had to focus on Minjun's absolute taste, but as a customer, you couldn't help but be in awe of his abilities.'

Realistically speaking, you couldn't split the two apart. The absolute taste was a part of Minjun's abilities. It made the PD recall a conversation with Martin.

'Do you know what the most amazing thing was about making that series? In the beginning, Minjun was not really a very talented chef.'

'But he managed to last until the final three, didn't he? With your personality, I doubt you would have asked to push him forward for his absolute taste. No, even if you did, there is no way the judges would have done as you wanted. So then what happened? Was he just lucky?'

'How could he survive on luck when there were so many competitions? His skills increased.'

'..... Is cooking something that someone's skill can increase that quickly?'

'I'm sure technique improves slowly. But his intuition about food increased in a scary fashion. No, to be more specific, he absorbed the cooking styles of everyone around him. If you take a closer look, there were a lot of dishes that other contestants had attempted among the dishes that Minjun cooked in the second half of the show. That was how much he was stimulated.'

‘So what are you trying to say?’

As the PD could not endure the frustration and asked, this was how Martin had responded.

‘He will become a completely different person depending on who is around him. If he goes into a good chef’s kitchen, he will absorb all of it to make it his. His focus when it comes to learning something is out of this world.’

And that Jo Minjun was currently in Rachel’s kitchen. The kitchen of the person known to be the greatest chef in the world. The PD started to think to himself.

‘Minjun, please show us. Please show your growth to me, and

Chapter 198: The Courtship of 36 People (2)

“Mr. Pabo.”

The unexpected voice brought the PD, Pabo, back to reality. Pabo looked around. Rachel was looking at him.

“Yes?”

“They will be arriving soon.”

“Ah. Got it. Yes. Thank you very much. Film team. Over here!”

Pabo headed out of the kitchen and motioned to his staff. Jo Minjun looked toward Rachel with confusion.

“Arrived? Who is coming?”

“You’ll find out soon enough.”

Rachel just smiled and did not respond. He wondered if he could coax it out of her if he continued to ask, but Jo Minjun did not want to test out his theory. He wasn’t extremely curious about it. If it is someone Rachel invited, they will be either epicureans or chefs. And no matter who it is, they are bound to be pretty famous. Knowing that much was enough. Or so he thought.

But the guest who arrived one hour later was out of Jo Minjun’s expectations. To be specific, the guests, plural, were all out of Minjun’s expectations.

There were 36 of them.

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LAX. Los Angeles International Airport’s parking lot was filled with buses as usual. Rachel’s guests were in one of those buses. A basic charter bus with nothing unique about it. There were no special decorations or anything, on a quick glance, it just looked like a bus full of tourists.

Naturally, there were some people who were not satisfied with

the arrangements. A woman with curly red hair was one of those people. She let out a sigh and shook her head.

“Grand Chef gets a plane for the chefs they invite.”

“Debra. That is Grand Chef. What they are filming right now is more like a documentary. In addition, the chefs on that plane were Chef Rachel and Chef Sergei. The two of them deserve something like that.”

The person to respond was Dave, the head chef of the first three-star restaurant that Jo Minjun ever visited, one of the branches of Rose Island. The woman named Debra who was being scolded by Dave just weakly banged her forehead on the window as she responded.

“I don’t know. Of course, we are lacking compared to Teacher Rachel or Sergei, that wacky old man, but think about the total number of stars all of us here have together. If it wasn’t for the fact that many of them opened restaurants outside of the Michelin Guide’s supported area we probably could have had 100 stars together.”

“You sure? In order for the 36 of us to have 100 stars, the majority of us would need to have three stars. You yourself only have one star.”

“... ... That hurts a bit.”

Debra scowled as she turned her head away with nothing else to say. Dave looked around the bus. Inside this bus that could fit a little more than 40 people, a little less than 30 people were currently on board. Dave let out a grunt as he started to caress his chin.

“They’re late.”

“It would be weirder if everybody arrived at the same time when we have people coming over from all around the world.”

“How long has it been since we all gathered together?”

“Not sure. All I know is that it has been at least ten years. Just us in the United States is one thing, but with people going all over the world ...teacher Rachel really is our center point.”

“Rose Island just the thought of that name standing back up makes my heart go crazy.”

“I don’t care about anything else. I’m just happy that teacher is cooking again.”

Debra had a blank expression as she nostalgically thought about the past before starting to smile. It was at that moment. A thick but weak voice interjected into the conversation.

“But did you all hear about the rumor?”

The one to speak was a sturdy built white man with a shaved head. Dave looked behind him and asked.

“I’m not sure what rumor you are talking about.”

“I heard that teacher plans to take that kid, Jo Minjun, as her successor.”

That statement made the entire bus go silent. It was a quite sensitive topic to discuss. Dave crossed his arms and let out a groan. He then quietly responded.

“Philip. That is not something for us to discuss.”

“Why not? We are all teacher’s students. We are also soldiers of Rose Island. If we are going to get a new general we should at least be able to voice our opinion.”

“It is not that I don’t understand what you are trying to say. But it isn’t like teacher has said anything to us. She might get the wrong idea if we base our thoughts on rumors.”

“I have no desire for her to have the wrong idea. But you can’t help but be curious about it. If teacher really is putting her hopes into that little kid, or not Dave. You’ve met him before. How was he?”

Debra, as well as all of the other chefs who were paying attention to their conversation, perked up their ears at Philip's question. Dave frowned after feeling burdened, before starting to mumble as if he was deep in thought.

"I'm not really sure. All he did was try my food and instantly figure out my recipe. What I do know for sure is that he does have an absolute taste. If all of you remember teacher Daniel, you know very well what having a talented palate means."

"He really has an absolute taste? It wasn't fabricated or exaggerated?"

"If there was something like that, there is no way teacher would have taken him under her wings."

"I guess that is true."

Debra nodded her head. Absolute taste. And although it was just suspicions, Rachel's potential successor. Jo Minjun had some fancy titles to his name. And the latter title was one that held even more meaning for these chefs of Rose Island.

Philip crossed his arms. You could clearly see the complicated emotions on his face.

"I'm not sure whether I should be nervous or excited. Normally, I would be excited to hear about someone with absolute taste and want to feed them my food. But hearing that he's my competition....."

"Competition? He's still just a kid with a demi chef role. There's no need to be so concerned with him is there?"

"You know that there are monsters who do things in one year that take others ten years to learn. Jo Minjun is a strong opponent. Sigh, I already had a headache going up against all of you"

Although they never talked about it, the position of Rachel Rose's successor was one that all of the Rose Island head chefs dreamt about. It wasn't their greed to own all of Rachel Rose's estate. They

cared more about the fame of being the representative of Rose Island. After dedicating their whole lives to Rose Island, that title held so much more meaning for all of them.

But if the main branch is restored like this ... there was a good chance that the head chef of the main branch will take over that representative role. Of course, nobody had any complaints because Rachel was going to be the head chef of the main branch right now, but if Jo Minjun or someone else became the head chef and their skills were not significantly better than the rest of them here ... that might lead to some problems.

The reason for all 36 head chefs of the branch locations gathered here today was not only to congratulate the revival of the main branch but also because of their curiosity for the future.

That was why they all had serious expressions when they finally all gathered together and arrived at Rose Island. Dave looked around the restaurant with nostalgic eyes. He too had worked at this location at one point. It was painful to see this place completely empty the last ten years. Seeing this place lit back up made him feel so good.

“... Who are those people?”

“I recognize some of them. They’re all chefs. Rose Islands’ head chefs. Are they all head chefs.....?”

The TV staff didn’t seem that surprised, but the servers, chefs, and the rest of the restaurant family seemed nervous after seeing so many people walk in. Rachel smiled brightly as she stepped in front of the chefs.

“It has been a long time. All of you ... well, most of you. I did see some of you in the last ten years.”

“That’s not because we didn’t want to meet you. Teacher, you were the one who wouldn’t meet with us. You were hidden away like a princess in the middle of a forest.”

Debra shot back with a bitter voice. Rachel's gaze became more gentle.

"You're right. I did hide away for a while. But forget princess, it looks like you've become a queen during that time. Listen to all that sass in your voice."

"You seemed quite gentle on TV so I thought you really did get older, but it seems you are not completely useless yet."

"Looking at the respect you are showing your teacher, I can understand it. You're still a one star?"

"Damn it. That's because the epicureans who showed up at that time scored it however they wanted. Those punks really had no proper decorum fitting a professional."

"So you are telling me that you've continued to meet unprofessional epicureans year after year? Enough. Excuses get you nowhere Debra."

"Are you really going to be like this to your cute student you haven't met in years?"

"Are you really going to be like this to your so-called respectable teacher after so long?"

Debra glared at Rachel with teary eyes before quickly approaching her and tightly hugging her. Rachel did not become anxious and just lightly smiled. Debra whispered in a slightly teary voice.

"I really missed you. Teacher, you should have met with me. Really."

"... .. I'm sorry."

Seeing Debra acting that way, the other head chefs started to slowly move. Rachel lifted up her palm to stop them.

"Stop. All thirty plus of you don't want me to hug you, do you? My body will ache if I did that. No."

“You’re still like a knife.”

“Old people like me have to take care of our own bodies.”

Rachel smiled as she responded to Dave’s words. It was at that moment that the demi chefs came out to the hall. Jo Minjun was walking next to the head chefs before flinching at all of the gazes of the head chefs that suddenly focused on him. They were not looking at the demi chefs. They were all looking at Jo Minjun. He started to speak in an awkward voice.

“Nice to meet you... ..?”

“Minjun, it’s been a while.”

“Ah, Dave. Good to see you.”

Jo Minjun shook Dave’s hand before looking toward Rachel. His eyes were full of questions. He seemed to be asking what this was all about. Rachel started to speak in a calm voice.

“The people gathered here are the head chefs of the Rose Island branches around the world. They all came here even with their busy schedules because I asked them to come. They are all wonderful people.”

“You threatened us by saying we won’t get any bonuses for the next year if we don’t come.”

“My my. Jeave. You didn’t understand that was a joke? You’re still just as slow.”

The black man named Jeave looked shocked. Was he really slow? Something similar must have happened in the past. Some of them recalled how she did not give any bonuses for a couple months ... Of course, Rachel did not continue with that conversation. She slowly looked toward the other chefs.

There are two reasons I asked all of you to gather here like this. First, with Rose Island’s reopening not far away, I wanted to share this moment with all of you before that happened. And second ...

... I wanted all of you to be the first customers to personally take a look and grade the dishes of this kitchen. All of you knew Daniel well and should remember the tastes of his food.”

“Are you planning on recreating the tastes of the past?”

The voice that asked the question was slightly shaking. There was no other choice. All of the Rose Island branch locations tried everything they could to imitate or chase after the taste of the main branch, but there were barely any locations that managed to recreate the taste of the old main branch in more than one or two dishes. No, it would not be wrong to say there were absolutely no locations that managed to do that.

Just thinking about experiencing that taste again made them shiver with excitement. Whether the body was shaking as a chef or as a person who enjoys food, he no, they, could not tell. Rachel answered back.

“We will not be recreating the old taste.”

“..... Huh?”

“Even Daniel would not want me living in the past by his grave. I am going to show that unlucky human. The main branch will progress much further than where it was in the past. It will evolve even more.”

She proclaimed with a serious voice.

“I will make it happen.”

Chapter 199: The Courtship of 36 People (3)

Nobody in the room thought that Rachel was bluffing. Although Rachel was not always a serious person, she was not the type to joke about the seriousness of her cooking. If someone at Rachel's level did not have this much confidence, that would make it a bigger issue. Debra asked with an expression that seemed to be half faith and half concern.

“Will it be possible? You’ve become rusty after ten years.”

“An aged tiger does not turn into a cat. It’s claws also don’t become brittle.”

“Oh mys. Should I gift you a nail clipper?”

“.....That sense of humor of yours. That is the reason you still haven’t managed to get past one star.”

“Man, are you going to keep rubbing that in?”

Debra started to glare. Rachel smiled before looking around at everyone else. She then continued in a calm voice.

“Anyways, since it is like this, I will ask for your harsh critique while you are here. For me, as well as for my children. You can even swear at them if you want. Just don’t hit them. There’s no way one of you has become the type of idiotic head chef who hits his family, right?”

“If we became a head chef like that, we would be in prison instead of here.”

“Good. Then please help me out. Annoy everyone here until they want nothing to do with you anymore.”

Dave started to lightly smile.

“That is our specialty.”

“The confit is done well. But that’s only natural since the machine automatically does everything for you. Unfortunately, you did not simmer the yuzu sauce correctly. Javier, you already know that it feels like grains of sand, right?”

“... .. Mm, I haven’t tasted it yet so I’m not really sure.”

“You sent out a dish you made without tasting it first? If teacher Rachel saw it, she would have already started to swear. Ah, has she become too docile compared to our days? Is that why you aren’t nervous at all?”

“No, that’s not

Javier started to stumble over his words and had an anxious expression on his face. He tried his best to smile, but it was clearly visible that it was an awkward smile.

As soon as Rachel had finished speaking, the head chefs started to look for issues like they had been waiting for her to say it. Nothing was off limits, naturally including the food, the attitude while cooking, and even the attires. And of course, the arrows weren’t pointed only toward Javier. Debra was standing with her arms crossed and a frown on her face right next to Janet.

“Did you know that I was really excited when I first saw you? I guess it was something like camaraderie as a fellow female chef.”

“That sounds like you’re no longer excited.”

“It’s more that it is disappointing. Look at this tuna ceviche carpaccio. The thickness of the two pieces are not completely uniform. Of course it still isn’t a big difference, but it is not enough. Where do you think you are working right now?”

“Rose Island.”

“Do you do know what that name symbolizes?”

Debra was speaking in a picky yet somewhat respectful tone, making anyone listening become confused about her true feelings.

However, Janet was not confused. It was because she thankfully had a similar personality to Debra. There was no misunderstanding. Debra's words were sincerely full of concern and care.

“Yes. It means that I am a part of this country's greatest restaurant.”

“Not just in this country, but throughout the world. And the main branch is the pride of all of us chefs. Our pride of having roots in the world's greatest restaurant. All of that now rests in your hands. Please don't do anything that will make us look bad. That is the way for you to hold your head up high even more confidently than now as well.”

Janet bit down on her lips before nodding her head. Debra continued to speak bluntly, without consoling Janet at all.

“What do you think is the most important thing for a female chef to survive in a kitchen?”

Janet just quietly looked toward Debra. Her expression then quickly changed to a glare. She then spit out her answer.

“.....Malice.”

“I'm some ways, you might be right. But if that malice ends up tiring you out, it won't be bad to get rid of that too. Our stamina is lacking compared to the men, and we can try to fight with our orderliness or cleanliness, but among chefs, many of the men are the same way, even to the point they look like they have OCD. The only thing we can do is to not settle. ‘This should be enough This is perfect.’ We cannot be satisfied that easily. This carpaccio, are you satisfied with it?”

Janet quietly looked at her carpaccio before throwing all of it into the trash can. She then answered in a slightly more determined voice.

“I will do it again.”

“Please do.”

Anderson scoffed in disbelief while watching Janet. It was at that moment that someone started to talk to him as if they were making fun of him.

“Anderson, you seem to be pretty relaxed. You even have time to watch other people cook.”

“No reason I shouldn’t be relaxed.”

Anderson responded shortly before filling the pasta with the lamb and vegetable mix. The chef who was quietly watching Anderson work slowly started to speak.

“I heard you are the Russo’s kid and that you learning cooking by helping out in the kitchen from when you were young.”

“I’m sorry, but please don’t bring that up. Before I am my parents’ child, I am my own person. I do not enjoy being treated like my parents’ belonging.”

“Hmm.....makes sense. Children always want to become independent of their parents. Anderson. The way you are forming that ravioli is great. No matter what you think, you did learn that from you parents, did you not?”

Anderson did not respond. It was his way of saying that he would not chat if the chef mentioned his parents. However, the chef did not give up. The reason he mentioned that was not just to annoy Anderson.

“However, you may have cooked under your parents, but you probably didn’t learn how to supervise people. Anderson, are you certain about the taste of the filling that your assistant made?”

“.....Huh?”

“I asked you if you think the filling your assistant made is perfect.”

“I can’t taste it right now. I’ll find out after cooking it and tasting

it.”

“And if it doesn’t seem right, you’re going to throw all of these raviolis away?”

Anderson’s face stiffened and he could not respond. The fact that his hands stopped moving showed his nervousness. Anderson slowly turned his gaze toward his assistant, Gerrick. However, Gerrick quickly shook his head.

“I followed the recipe perfect. There were no mistakes.”

“Yes. I am not saying Gerrick made a mistake either. This situation is completely Anderson’s fault. Anderson, you should learn to trust your peers. However, before Gerrick is your peer, he is your assistant. He is someone you need to care for and help raise. That type of trust is something you should only have after paying attention to everything he does and verifying that he can be trusted. But based on what I’ve seen, you never seem to check if Gerrick is doing things correctly.”

“..... The efficiency would fall if I work while checking everything he is doing.”

“Yes. I know what you mean. However, something like the filling that you won’t know whether it is right or wrong until after you cook it, you should have made sure to check throughout the prepping. Doing that while not letting your efficiency fall is a skill of a demi chef.”

It is possible that there is no issues with the filling that Gerrick made. In fact, there probably were no issues. However, the chef was saying that instead of just relying it on trusting Gerrick to do it right, he should have made sure it was being done correctly. Anderson understood what the chef was trying to say. And.....

‘I guess the things I got from my parents are the only things I have in the end.’

He couldn’t help but have such thoughts again. His delicate and

skillful cooking skills were all learned at Glouto.

It wasn't that Jo Minjun was free from the head chefs' gazes while all of the other demi chefs were being picked on. In fact, Jo Minjun probably had the most eyes on him. There was no way it would be any different. It was extremely clear that Rachel had an unprecedented level of interest in Minjun.

Some were looking at him as the competition, others were looking at him with expectation, and there were probably some looking at him with bitterness as well. All of those gazes were burdensome at first, but Jo Minjun was able to quickly get rid of the anxiety it caused. This wasn't the first time he was cooking in front of a lot of people.

Jo Minjun was making all sorts of molecular gastronomy dishes. He made an espuma out of a fruit cream he made, along with hand-making ice cream, sherberts, and jelly from scratch. Of course, Jo Minjun did not do all of that on his own. His assistant Maya also helped prepared the ingredients and mix them together. That was where the fun was happening.

"Minjun, hasn't it only been a few months since that guy became a demi chef? Didn't they say he has no experiences before this?"

"That is what I heard."

"Then how is he so good at using his assistant?"

The head chefs were mumbling in disbelief. Demi chefs were chefs, but it really was a time for them to learn. Advanced cooking skills, utilizing assistants properly, being a demi chef was the time to learn these things. It was not their fault that they were having difficulties finding faults with Jo Minjun's cooking skills. It was because the majority of what Jo Minjun was making right now was molecular gastronomy.

Of course, they would be able to find faults if they focused on the foundations, such as boiling the ingredients to make a sauce.

However, that was when they were looking at the head chef level, not the demi chef level. But even then, they might have difficulties, because when it came to boiling sauces, Jo Minjun was already far past the demi chef level. He could even be called a sauce specialist at this point.

“It wasn’t for nothing that he became in charge of the molecular gastronomy section.”

“Yes. He seems to specialize in it.”

“I can understand that he has a knack for it or is naturally talented. But how can he utilize his assistant so well? I thought that was completely down to experience.”

It made sense for them to feel that way. Jo Minjun seemed to be completely aware of how Maya was cooking. The evidence was clear. Every time they felt like Maya was making a mistake or the results were going to be different than expected Jo Minjun immediately raised his voice to guide Maya.

Sometimes, the assistance of the prep cook could make the demi chef more frazzled. No, getting assistance was the number one reason new demi chefs got frazzled. Since they were not doing everything with their own hands, it was difficult to draw the flow of things in your head. Thinking about whether or not the assistant did something wrong and needing to check to make sure made many demi chefs feel like they had more things to do than less because of the extra hands.

“..... I wish I had a demi chef like that in my kitchen too. No, at his level, he would probably do well even if I made him a sous chef. He doesn’t make any mistakes at all.

There was no way there could be a mistake. Jo Minjun was able to see the expected score of a dish. If Maya brings over a sauce with any mistake in the composition, Jo Minjun could anticipate what the end results would be.

Furthermore, since he was able to instantly verify whenever a mistake happened, he was able to develop an intuition separate from the system to know when to check Maya's work and how to best guide her. The best way to describe it might be that since he was trying to solve the question while knowing the answer, he was able to quickly determine the method.

Dishes that went through such treatment were naturally going to be tasty. It was almost perfect with no faults at all.

It was not that Jo Minjun had better cooking skills than the other demi chefs. In fact, when it came to skills and efficiency, Anderson or Janet were probably better. No, they were definitely better. However, Jo Minjun's greatest talent was not in cooking, but in supervising. Dave let out a moan and started to mumble.

"Based on what I have seen so far, he is probably the best in the world when it comes to having the talent to become a sous chef. Of course, that is only if he can show the same focus and supervision with a lot more people"

"In that case, isn't his style more like Teacher Rachel than Teacher Daniel? Teacher Daniel was better at creating dishes than supervision. Teacher Rachel was extremely talented in supervision."

"There is a flaw in your words. We have yet to see what kind of creativity and intuition he has for cooking."

Dave's words made the other chef let out an 'ah' and close his mouth. Seeing how talented Minjun was at handling his assistant, the chef naturally thought that there was no way Minjun was also talented in the other aspect as well. That is because it would be too unfair if there was someone in the world who had everything. Dave mumbled in a quiet voice.

"If he also has that intuition."

Dave did not continue after that. Everybody else subconsciously

thought about the end of Dave's sentence in their minds. All of them were thinking different ways of finishing the sentence, but the content was pretty similar. If Jo Minjun had that intuition as well, no, if he can develop that intuition, then

Chapter 200: The Courtship of 36 People (4)

‘..... It’s not something that we need to think about just yet.’

Dave calmed himself. Although Jo Minjun was showing a completely flawless performance that seemed to be much better than the demi chef level, you could not use that alone to determine his future.

Dave started to speak.

“Minjun. Rafael mentioned that you did not like the molecular gastronomy section at first.”

“It’s not that I didn’t like it I was just a bit reluctant.”

“It sounds the same to me.”

“It is not that I do not like molecular gastronomy. It is fun and fresh. That is how I felt about it from the beginning. However, back then I wondered if my foundation was not sturdy enough to take on molecular gastronomy.”

“So you are saying that once you tried it, you felt like your foundation was sturdy? Or is it that you determined that the foundation was not that important?”

Jo Minjun did not turn around to look at Dave. he cleaned the cream off the plate with a cloth as he answered in a serious yet calm voice.

“My skill continued to increase even while doing molecular gastronomy. To be more specific, my intuition about cooking. They are all connected in the end.”

“Do you not have any regrets? I’m sure there are some ingredients you enjoy working with. Fish, meat, any feelings of wanting to work more with other ingredients?”

“The thing I like the most are sauces. If there is something even in the sauce category that I like the most it is pulling out the

natural taste of fruits without losing anything.”

He became even more certain about the latter in recent days. He knew what his own personal style was going to be. It was a little different than going for naturalism, but he wanted to bring to life the full taste of the fruits.

...

Of course, it was not that he didn't like things like demi-glace sauce that was made from meat. Soy sauce, gochujang, fish sauce, vegetables, nuts, it was fun to use all sorts of ingredients. However, that rich and sweet taste when you use fruits was really what Jo Minjun found to be the most entertaining and fresh.

Dave seemed to be playing devil's advocate as he asked a follow-up question.

“It seems that you have already determined your path. There are a lot of people who do not know what style they will have even when they are sous chefs. Do you feel like you may have made up your mind too early?”

“In my opinion, knowing what you want quickly will not be a problem.”

“You haven't had a chance to try all different aspects of cooking. Wouldn't it be a more accurate decision after trying more things out?”

“The fact that I have determined my style does not mean that I will not look at anything else. I will look at everything. However, I will put my personal spin on all of it. I believe that you need to have your own specialty, your own weapon of sort, for the future.”

Dave smiled instead of responding. To be honest, Dave did not think that it was bad for Jo Minjun to already have his own cooking philosophy.

He just wanted to know whether Jo Minjun had really thought things through to figure out his cooking philosophy or if he just

picked it because he just liked the section and wanted to pursue it.

After hearing Minjun's answer, Dave did not think he needed to decipher Minjun anymore. Once Dave went into the hall and sat down, Debra, who happened to just finish speaking with Janet, came down and sat next to him. Dave smiled as looked toward Debra and asked.

"What do you think about teacher's new demi chefs?"

"They're not bad."

"Is that it?"

"To be honest, they're good. I'm sure we'll know more once we try their food, but what I saw in there was pretty close to perfect. You could probably call them the elites amongst the demi chefs. Even the prep cooks are the same. It was really difficult to find something to critique."

Debra shrugged her shoulders. But this was normal. Rose Island's demi chefs were always the best. The most talented chefs gather at Rose Island because of its being the most famous restaurant. Out of all of those talented chefs, only the best of the best can make the selection to stand in this Rose Island kitchen. Since everyone is talented from the bottom up, the food going out to the customers had no choice but to be close to perfect. Since even the branch locations were like this, how could it be any different for the main store?

"It seemed like you spent a lot of time with that female demi-chef."

"I can't help it. As a woman, I can't help but get emotional when I see another woman trying to survive in a kitchen. I've been there before; I know just how hard it is to do it."

"Only women have it hard? Men have it hard too."

"It doesn't mean that men have it easy. It is not about who has it better. Men and women are different. And it is not easy to meet

someone else who can mentor you to navigate that difference. Of course, it really doesn't matter here because teacher Rachel is here. So maybe I was doing more for no reason."

"But it is a good thing. You used to suffer with that problem with the past, but now you are at a position where you can even give advice to someone else."

Dave smiled gently. As Debra shrugged her shoulders again, they heard an odd engine sound from outside the restaurant. When they turned to look out the window, they saw a yellow kindergarten bus stop outside.

Debra asked in a slightly anxious voice.

"Was there a kindergarten next to here?"

"Only one kid got off so she probably just lives around here."

".....She seems to be walking here?"

A brown-haired girl wearing a water drop patterned one piece, Ella, was walking over to the restaurant. A moment later, her small hands opened the door to the restaurant. After seeing the 36 unfamiliar faces in the hall and kitchen, Ella gasped before she started to hiccup.

"This, this is the right place"

She seemed to be scared at the sudden situation and stepped back to look at the building and then back inside with a slightly teary face. The outside of the building, the inside of the building, and even the furniture was all the same, but the people were different. Ella bit down on her lips. She was scared, but she did not want to cry. But Ella could not do anything about the tears forming in her eyes. It was at that moment.

"Ella. What are you doing over there? Hurry up and come in."

"Uncle!"

Ella seemed extremely relieved as she went and hugged Minjun.

Seeing Minjun pat the sniffing Ella's back, Dave asked as if he could not understand the situation.

"Just what who is that child?"

"Ah, she is our pâtissière's daughter. The princess of Rose Island. She comes to the restaurant every so often."

Jo Minjun smiled as he calmed Ella down. Minjun picked up a tissue from the table and put it to Ella's nose.

"Okay, blow."

"Pffffff!"

Ella blew her nose as hard as she could. She then looked toward Jo Minjun still with teary eyes as she asked.

"There were so many people that I thought I got lost."

"What did we say we will do if we got lost?"

"Mm I need to call my mommy."

"And if you can't remember the number?"

"I need to call 911!"

"Our Ella is so smart."

Ella started to smile at Minjun's praise as if she was never scared in the first place. Debra was amazed as she silently clapped.

"Wow, I really want to learn that skill. I have absolutely no idea about what to do when my nieces and nephews start to cry."

"He's just good with people like he is with handling his assistant."

"Thank you for your compliments."

Jo Minjun smiled as he nodded his head. Debra took a peek behind Jo Minjun. The moment Jo Minjun came out of the kitchen, around a third of the head chefs who were in the kitchen followed him out. Were they really so conscious about this junior

who Rachel might be trying to groom?

‘Then I should resolve their curiosities.’

Dave started to speak.

“Minjun. I heard that the restaurant will be changing its menu every 15 days like before.”

“Yes. To be more specific, it is the ingredients that are changing, not the menu. We will always have seasonal ingredients. Of course, this is something all of you head chefs know more about than I do.”

“Just changing ingredients requires you to pay attention to different things when you are preparing the dishes. Are you prepared to always be able to adjust properly to the changes? No, I’m sure you can only answer this question by saying that you are confident. So let me change the question. How do you plan on adjusting to the changes? Am I digging too deep?”

“No. you mentioned that all of your pride is this main branch of Rose Island. Since I will be holding a piece of that pride, it is only natural for you to be curious about such a thing.”

That wasn’t really Dave’s point. From the beginning, none of them thought that Rachel would allow the demi chefs to make a mistake. They were not worried about the reputation of Rose Island at all. This was Rachel they were talking about. Out of the 36 head chefs that were gathered here today, none of them would be able to say that they were better than Rachel. She was their mentor, their teacher, and most importantly, their goal as a chef.

What they were curious about was his person named Jo Minjun. He is the first person in the world with absolute taste and also the first person Rachel personally scouted and showed interest in. They wanted to know the limits of his potential, as well as what image Rachel was trying to create through him.....they had no choice but to be curious.

‘.....Is he pretending to not know on purpose?’

Dave was smiling gently while also inspecting Jo Minjun’s expression. It did not look like he was just faking modesty. That should mean that he really had no idea what people were saying about him, as well as the potential future that is in store for him.....

‘Alan did mention that this person does not consider himself to be a genius.’

Was it modesty or did he just not know how to accurately judge his own talents? The Jo Minjun Dave could see had amazing abilities. It was not just his tongue that was developed. The way he ran his section. There

‘He mentioned earlier than he liked sauces the best.’

Realistically speaking, anyone who is running a large-scale kitchen has a tendency to end up focusing on sauces. They had no choice. Even if someone is interested in cooking steaks or making pasta and reaches a level of mastery in that areaonce the person became a head chef, they would not be doing the cooking. They could only indirectly interfere as needed.

That was why no matter how talented a person may be, the quality of the dishes they serve customers once they became a head chef could be completely disastrous. In fact, this actually happened quite often.

However, sauces won’t face the same issue. A head chef who specializes in sauces will focus not on the cook of the meat or the al dente texture of a pasta, but on the sauce that will go over it. And sauces were something that really could not go wrong no matter who made it, as long as you followed the recipe correctly.

‘It is a wise decision.’

That was why the advice lately has been to put your efforts into making sauces if you wanted to become the head chef of a fine

dining restaurant. But it really was not easy to do that when you were a demi-chef. No matter whether you were in the pasta section, appetizer, or even main, it was difficult to put all of your efforts into sauces.

In that aspect, the fact that Jo Minjun ended up in the molecular gastronomy section was a great opportunity for him. Molecular gastronomy had a lot of dishes that were related to sauces or focused on sauces as the core. The results that come from combining different ingredients, the flavors that are created when the ingredients meet the different molecular gastronomy techniquesthis would be a time when Jo Minjun could properly learn all of it.

‘Did he really end up in the molecular gastronomy section as a coincidence, or did he aim for it’

If he was aiming for it, he really was a sly fox. It was the moment Dave was deep in thought. Maybe the staff found Dave to be impressionable as he continued to talk to Jo Minjun, as they approached Dave and asked for an interview. Dave naturally did not reject it. In the corner of the hall was the PD Pabo, standing with an occupational smile as he started to speak.

“It is an honor to meet you, Dave.”

“No need for such praises. I am just one of many common chefs in the world.”

“If a there star head chef is common, our country’s cooking scene would have dominated the world.”

The formalities did not last very long. Pabo soon started with the questions.

“I’m sure you have heard the rumors in the cooking world about how Chef Rachel is thinking about making Chef Minjun her successor. Your name was always on the list of Chef Rachel’s potential successors, so what do you think about this?”

“.....I guess how I answer this question can either make or break my image.”

“So please think carefully before you answer.”

Dave smiled bitterly. Although he may have dedicated his life to cooking, even he could not be completely free from this thing called greed. Rachel did not have any children, and this made many Rose Island head chefs hope that she would pass Rose Island to one of them in the future.

Not all of them were like this, but this was the reason many of them were extremely cognizant of Minjun. If Jo Minjun really became Rachel's successor, they did not know whether he would only get full control of this Venice location or full control of the Rose Island brand and all of its locations around the world.

To be honest, Dave really did not care much for money. If he did, he would never have worked at Rose Island. He would have gone to work as a hotel chef. There was just one thing he wanted.

“Rose Island has been my entire life. And I have never regretted that decision even once.”

“Yes, it is an amazing life you have had.”

“I'm sure the other chefs probably feel something similar to what I am feeling. Although talking about something like this when teacher Rachel has not personally said anything seems petty but since you asked me the question, I cannot just choose not to answer. Yes. If I am being honest with you, if he became the successor right now, I will not accept it. He is definitely talented and will probably be an amazing chef. However, he is not there yet. He is still a demi chef and needs to continue to grow. Depending on how far he can grow, the attitudes of the other chefs will change as well.”

“When you say their attitudedo you mean their feelings about whether or not he will hold full control over the Rose Island

brand?”

“It is similar. If he grows into a common chef, nobody will approve of him, however, if he is able to show an amazing talent and stunning dishes at teacher Rachel or teacher Daniel’s level.....”

Dave shrugged his shoulders.

“Who in their right mind wouldn’t try to court him?”

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Wow! We hit 200!

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